

THE
Manchester Quarterly:

A JOURNAL OF
LITERATURE AND ART.

PUBLIC LIBRARY,
DETROIT, MICH.
APR 1 1903

VOL. XXI., 1902.

PUBLISHED FOR
THE MANCHESTER LITERARY CLUB,
BY
SHERRATT & HUGHES,
27, ST. ANN STREET, MANCHESTER.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
The Passion Play of 1900. By C. H. BELLAMY. With Illustrations	1
Horace Ep I. ii., 39-42. Translated. By H. E. CAMPBELL	15
Jane Austen and the Novel. By EDMUND MERCER	16
The Old Fortune Teller: A Lancashire Sketch. By A. W. FOX ..	34
Sonnet. By W. R. CREDLAND	56
In the Footsteps of Dante. By C. E. TYRER	57
Maeterlinck on Bees. By WALTER BUTTERWORTH	67
The "Forget-me-Not." By C. T. T. BATEMAN	78
Concerning some Literary Club Portraits. By JOHN MORTIMER. With an Illustration	99
Scandinavian Stories about Huldre. By ABEL HEYWOOD	116
Sonnet. By WM. BAGSHAW	142
The Versification of Spenser's Epithalamion and Prothalamion. By GEO. MILNER	143
Lifting Tuesday. By A. W. FOX	151
Some Cheshire Village Characteristics. By W. V. BURGESS	171
Christopher Smart. By J. H. SWANN	180
Poem: "The Child on its Mother's Knee." By A. W. FOX	193
Lancashire Novelists: Mrs. Gaskell. By JOHN MORTIMER. With Illustrations	195
Symbol and Allegory in Spenser. By WALTER BUTTERWORTH	229
Hydrington Prosecution Society. By J. E. CRAVEN	244
The Metrical Imitations of Chatterton. By W. C. HALL	267
Sonnet. By LAURENCE CLAY	276
Immanuel Kant. By GUSTAV JACOBY	277
Sonnet. By W. V. BURGESS	294
Our Scholar Gipsy: Cuthbert Evan Tyrer. By JOHN MORTIMER. With Portrait	295

CONTENTS.

	PAGE,
Sonnets. By ABRAHAM STANSFIELD	307
Cyrano de Bergerac. By EDMUND MERCER	309
Some Musical and other Impressions of a Visit to Sicily. By HENRY	
WATSON, Mus. Doc.,	333
Theodore Hook. By MARK BAILEY. With Portrait	352
Some Women of Sir Walter Scott's Novels. By GEO. SHONE	370
The Mabinogion. By JOHN DAVIES	384

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Passion Play at Oberammergau: Christ before Pilate. ..	Frontispiece
" " : The Stage showing the Chorus in	
Position	8
Sam Bamford and his Friends of the Manchester Literary Club..	99
Portrait of Mrs. Gaskell	195
Bas-relief of Mrs. Gaskell	210
Mrs. Gaskell's Grave	228
Portrait of Cuthbert Evan Tyrer	295
Portrait of Theodore Hook	352





INDEX.

- Allegory in Spenser. By W. Butterworth. 229.
- Austen (Jane) and the Novel. By E. Mercer. 16.
- Bagshaw (W.) Sonnet. 142.
- Bailey (Mark) Theodore Hook, Author and Humourist. 352.
- Bateman (C. T. T.) "Forget-me-Not" Annual. 78.
- Bees, Maeterlinck on By W. Butterworth. 67.
- Bellamy (C.H.) Passion Play of 1900. 1.
- Bergerac (Cyrano de) Notice of. By E. Mercer. 309.
- Burgess (W. V.) Some Cheshire Village Characteristics. 171.
- Burgess (W. V.) Sonnet. 294.
- Butterworth (W.) Maeterlinck on Bees. 67.
- Butterworth (W.) Symbol and Allegory in Spenser. 229.
- Campbell (H. E.) Horace Ep. I. ii. 39-42. 15.
- Chatterton (T.) Metrical Imitations of. By W. C. Hall. 267.
- Cheshire Village Characteristics. By W. V. Burgess. 171.
- Clay (L.) Sonnet. 276.
- Craven (J. E.) Hydrington Prosecution Society. 244.
- Credland (W. R.) Sonnet. 56.
- Dante, In the Footsteps of. By C. E. Tyrer. 57.
- Davies (J.) The Mabinogion. 384.
- "Forget-me-Not" Annual. By C. T. T. Bateman. 78.
- Fox (A. W.) Lifting Tuesday. 151.
- Fox (A. W.) Old Fortune Teller. 34.
- Fox (A. W.) Poem. 193.
- Gaskell (Mrs. E. C.) as a Novelist. By John Mortimer. 195.
- Hall (W. C.) Metrical Imitations of Chatterton. 267.
- Heywood (A.) Scandinavian Stories about Huldre. 116.
- Hook (Theodore) Notice of. By Mark Bailey. 352.
- Horace Ep. I. ii. 39-42. Translated by H. E. Campbell. 15.
- Huldre, Scandinavian Stories about. By Abel Heywood. 116.
- Hydrington Prosecution Society. By J. E. Craven. 244.
- In the Footsteps of Dante. By C. E. Tyrer. 57.
- Jacoby (G.) Immanuel Kant. 277.
- Kant (Immanuel) Notice of. By G. Jacoby. 277.
- Lancashire Sketch: Lifting Tuesday. By A. W. Fox. 151.
- Lancashire Sketch: Old Fortune Teller. By A. W. Fox. 34.
- Lifting Tuesday. By A. W. Fox. 151.
- Literary Club Portraits. By John Mortimer. 99.

INDEX.

- Mabinogion. By John Davies. 384.
 Maeterlinck (M.) on Bees. By W. Butterworth. 67.
 Mercer (E.) *Cyrano de Bergerac*. 309.
 Mercer (E.) *Jane Austen and the Novel*. 16.
 Metrical Imitations of Chatterton. By W. C. Hall. 267.
 Milner (G.) *Versification of Spenser's Epithalamion and Prothalamion*. 143.
 Mortimer (J.) *Mrs. Gaskell*. 195.
 Mortimer (J.) *Our Scholar Gipsy*. 295.
 Mortimer (J.) *Some Literary Club Portraits*. 99.
 Musical Impressions of a Visit to Sicily. By Hy. Watson. 333.
 Old Fortune Teller. By A. W. Fox. 34.
 Our Scholar Gipsy: C. E. Tyrer. By John Mortimer. 295.
 Passion Play of 1900. By C.H. Bellamy 1.
 Poem. By A. W. Fox. 193.
 Portraits, Literary Club. By John Mortimer. 99.
 Scandinavian Stories about Huldre. By Abel Heywood. 116.
 Scott (Sir W.) *Women of his Novels*. By Geo. Shone. 370.
 Shone (G.) *Some Women of Sir Walter Scott's Novels*. 370.
 Sicily, Musical and other Impressions of. By Hy. Watson. 333.
 Smart (Christopher) Note on. By J. H. Swann. 180.
 Sonnet. By W. Bagshaw. 142.
 Sonnet. By W. V. Burgess. 294.
 Sonnet. By L. Clay. 276.
 Sonnet. By W. R. Credland. 56.
 Sonnets. By A. Stansfield. 307.
 Spenser (E.) *Symbol and Allegory in*. By W. Butterworth. 229.
 Spenser (E.) *Versification of his Epithalamion and Prothalamion*. By Geo. Milner. 143.
 Stansfield (A.) *Sonnets*. 307.
 Swann (J. H.) *Christopher Smart*. 180.
 Symbol and Allegory in Spenser. By W. Butterworth. 229.
 Tyrer (C. E.) *In Memoriam*. By John Mortimer. 295.
 Tyrer (C. E.) *In the Footsteps of Dante*. 57.
 Tyrer (C. E.) *Sonnets on* By A. Stansfield. 307.
 Versification of Spenser's *Epithalamion and Prothalamion*. By Geo. Milner. 143.
 Village Characteristics, Cheshire. By W. V. Burgess. 171.
 Watson (H.) *Musical and other Impressions of a Visit to Sicily*. 333.
 Women of Sir Walter Scott's Novels. By Geo. Shone. 370.



No.

I



No. LXXXI.—January, 1902.

Price 6d. net. { All Rights Reserved.

THE

Manchester

Quarterly

AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL

OF

LITERATURE AND ART.



Contents:

PAGE

I.—“The Passion Play at Oberammergau: Christ Before Pilate.”	Frontispiece.
II.—The Passion Play of 1900. By CHARLES H. BELLAMY. (<i>With Illustrations</i>)	I
III.—Horace, Ep. I: ii., 39-42. Translated by H. E. CAMPBELL	15
IV.—Jane Austen and the Novel. By EDMUND MERCER	16
V.—The Old Fortune Teller: A Lancashire Sketch. By ARTHUR W. FOX	34
VI.—Sonnet. By W. R. CREDLAND	56
VII.—In the Footsteps of Dante. By C. E. TYRER ...	57
VIII.—Maeterlinck on Bees. By WALTER BUTTERWORTH	67
IX.—The “Forget-me-not.” By CHAS. T. TALLENT-BATEMAN	78

Published by SHERRATT & HUGHES, 27, St. Ann Street, Manchester.

ENCYCLOPÆDIAS.

IF YOU PROPOSE PURCHASING AN

ENCYCLOPÆDIA,

THE UNDERNOTED FACTS REGARDING

CHAMBERS'S ENCYCLOPÆDIA

WILL INTEREST YOU.

Chambers's Encyclopædia.

The present edition, although dated 1895, is up-to-date, and abreast of the times in Science, Literature, Biography, Travel, &c. &c. Chambers's Encyclopædia is the only important work of this character to which the foregoing statement can be applied.

The book has been reprinted and revised since 1895, but the TITLES remain 1895. For confirmation of this statement call upon your bookseller, and consult such articles as Soudan, Acetylene, Argon, Bismarck, Gladstone, Jameson, Kitchener, &c. &c.

Chambers's Encyclopædia.

THE TEN VOLUMES

(Published at £5 in Cloth, and £7 10s. in Half Morocco)

Can be obtained from **Messrs. Sherratt & Hughes** for **£3 15s.** in Cloth ;
or **£5 12s. 6d.** in Half Morocco.

IT CAN ALSO BE PURCHASED IN SINGLE VOLUMES AT INTERVALS TO SUIT YOUR
CONVENIENCE.

Chambers's Encyclopædia.

OPINIONS OF EXPERTS.

SIR WALTER BESANT, writing in *THE WEEKLY SUN* for
Feb. 25, 1900, says:

" . . . The most important thing is a good Encyclopædia. . . . I therefore bought Chambers's Encyclopædia . . . a most excellent and trustworthy compendium of knowledge. I CANNOT IMAGINE ANY DIFFICULTY WHICH THIS WORK WOULD NOT MEET."

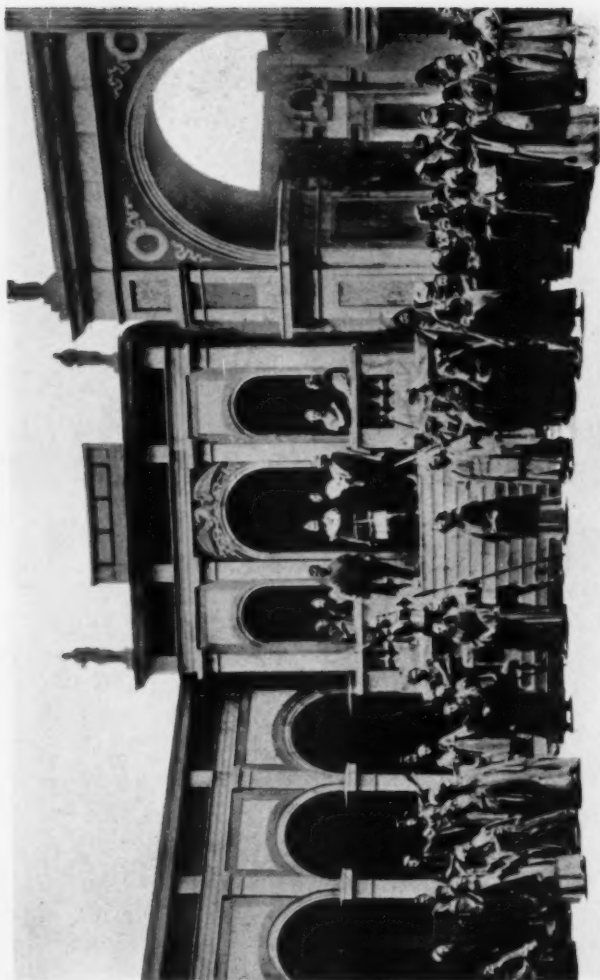
LONDON DAILY EXPRESS for the 19th of June, 1900:

" 'The Express' takes pleasure in stating that it regards CHAMBERS'S ENCYCLOPEDIA AS ABSOLUTELY THE BEST AND MOST RELIABLE IN THE MARKET."

MESSRS. SHERRATT & HUGHES

Will supply you with a Prospectus giving full particulars of

CHAMBERS'S ENCYCLOPÆDIA.



From a Photograph.

THE PASSION PLAY AT OBERAMMERGAU.
Christ Before Pilate.



THE PASSION PLAY OF 1900.

BY CHARLES H. BELLAMY.

OBER-AMMERGAU is a pleasant little village in a beautiful valley at the foot of the Bavarian Highlands, and is practically surrounded by mountains. But it is not notable merely for the beauty of its situation and surroundings, nor for its own inherent quaintness; many other villages, in Bavaria and elsewhere, possess similar charms, and are equally romantically situated. Like them, it might have been practically unknown to-day, except to the persistent and leisured seeker of these quiet picturesque retreats, were it not for its decennial representations of the Passion Play. Sacred plays have been performed from time immemorial in our own country, as well as in those of the continent; and are even performed in some places at the present day; indeed I had already seen two representations of the Passion before witnessing the one at Ober-Ammergau. But the performance at Ober-Ammergau, with its romantic history, special staging, and periodic repetition, has acquired the designation of "The Passion Play," and it bids fair to retain it for decades still to come, notwithstanding the little rifts of the money-making spirit which

A

unfortunately appear to be creeping in, along with subtle attempts to run the whole affair on commercial lines. It is to be hoped that the villagers will retain their simple-mindedness, and refuse to be exploited. One's feelings are a little jarred to find the streets partaking of the character of a fair, directly the performance is over. Rather would we go back to the greater simplicity of the performances of twenty or thirty years ago, before the iron horse shook his hoofs in this romantic spot—and before the hideous railway-station kind of a cover was made for the theatre. These are the adjuncts of a doubtful civilisation, which unfortunately have to be submitted to, for they are foreign to the character of the place, and to the dispositions of the villagers. In some mysterious and indefinable way they seem to be a people set apart. Thousands of Bavarian peasants live among mountains, but do not greatly differ in soul or mind from their kin lower down in the world. But the Ober-Ammergauers have the *Kofel*—their “guardian genius,” as they call it. Nobody else has that. The great *Kofel* Rock is a towering peak that reaches towards heaven, rearing its majestic head high above its fellows, with a marvellous grace and individuality all its own. And on the brow of the *Kofel*, black against the sunshine or the stars, a slender cross has been fixed, the gift of a king, catching the first light of dawn and the last rays of sunset. This is the villagers' standard of life, and they endeavour to live up to that lofty ideal; to think none but high thoughts, and to do no base deeds, and the effect of the world's great tragedy, symbolised by that lofty cross on *Kofel*'s brow, has mingled with the blood in their veins through almost countless generations. These people take their pleasures quietly, and with a simple dignity of resignation they take their sorrows quietly also.

The Passion Play has had a remarkable history. It dates from 1633, if not earlier. In that year the plague, or the "Black Death," appeared in this quiet valley, and spread with such direful results that it is said no house was spared, and no wedlock remained intact. In their despair the villagers consulted the monks of the neighbouring Benedictine monastery at Ettal, and, acting on their advice, they vowed to revive the performance of the Passion Play to the glory and honour of God, if only the epidemic would cease. The disease died out, and the people of Ober-Ammergau kept their promise. In the year 1680, however, it was decided to perform the play only every ten years. At the end of the 18th century Passion Plays were actually prohibited, and it would appear that Ober-Ammergau nearly shared the general prohibition, only the sturdy villagers appeared personally before the sovereign and reminded him of the privilege granted by the Elector Charles Theodore in 1780. They succeeded, and the King, Maximilian I, formally ratified this permission in 1811, since when the play has been regularly performed every decade, with the single exception of 1870, the year of the Franco-German war, when, as so many of the performers were called to serve under the colours, it could not be given. For this omission, however, ample amends were made in the year after the conclusion of peace.

The evolution of the text of the play has also had a strange history. Long before the pious Ammergauers took their oath, scriptural plays were performed in the district, where, owing to the many important monasteries, the priestly influence was strong. Amongst the most famous of these mediæval mysteries was the Augsburg play of "S.S. Ulrich and Afra," and with this was combined "The Beauteous Tragedy of the Sufferings, Death,

and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, founded on Holy Scripture," by Sebastian Wild, an Augsburg Meistersinger who flourished in the sixteenth century, the whole being rendered in rhyme. Alterations of and accretions to the text were numerous, until it became archaic and antiquated. So in 1815 a revision was made by one of the Ettal monks, Dr. Ottmar Weiss. Here for the first time appear the magnificent lines of the opening chorus, indeed most of the choral parts remain at the present day as Weiss left them. One other revision was made, for the play of 1860, and this was done by Geistlicher Rath Daisenberger, the worthy parish priest of Ober-Ammergau, who died in 1883. He was a man of learning and piety, and the author of ten or twelve dramas, not all Biblical, in addition to which he translated the "Antigone" of Sophocles. His revision brought the dialogue into more exact conformity with the text of scripture, those passages that he considered too harsh he modified, and above all, he carefully expunged all reference to doctrines not accepted by the entire Christian world. The result is that Christians of all confessions owe to his liberal and tolerant mind a text which is perfectly free from offence. He was for a number of years the director of the play, and his classical tastes have left their influence in the present Hellenic style and costume of the Chorus. It is the province of the Chorus to introduce, explain, and supplement the play, as well as to give proper expression to the frame of mind required by the action. The music for the choruses was composed for Dr. Weiss's text by Rochus Dedler, the village organist, in the early years of the century, but who was evidently no genius, as the music is distinctly a weak part of the performance. We must, however, bear in mind that possibly music of a higher order might be beyond the powers of the orchestra, which is entirely

made up of villagers, for although able architects and engineers from Munich or Vienna may assist and advise as to the buildings, and scene-painters and stage-managers may assist in the perfection of the arrangements, yet no townsman may assist in any way in the active part of a performance, not even as orchestral player or conductor. Not even persons from neighbouring villages are admitted to this service. It is a remarkable fact that the whole of the six or seven hundred persons who are engaged in every performance are chosen, absolutely without exception, from the natives of Ober-Ammergau. The pay they receive is said to be not very liberal, and when the play is over, they return to their ordinary occupations, in order to earn their bread by their own industry. To their credit be it said, they have always, whether as individuals or as a body, consistently refused to degrade the play by performing it elsewhere, or by exchanging their position for the dramatic stage of other places.

The stage has also experienced many transformations, both as regards position and size. Like many other Biblical and Mystery Plays it was in former times erected alongside of the church in the churchyard, and no protection from sun or rain was afforded to the spectators. The difficulty with regard to the dwellings of Annas and Pilate was solved in a remarkable manner. Neighbouring dwelling houses were requisitioned, and when it became necessary to change the scene in order to bring Christ before Pilate, or before the Hebrew judgment seat, the performers simply moved off to one or other of these houses, accompanied by the entire audience. Then a stage was built in a meadow to the north of the village with an open proscenium, and part of the auditorium was roofed in. But now a new erection has been called into use, a building which is not pretty, to say the least,

either internally or externally. However, it will contain an audience of 4,200 persons, which should mean a house of at least £1,250 at each performance. At the stage end, the railway station arch is just as open as in an actual railway station, and here is erected an immense stage, about 138 feet wide. The portion used for the tableaux and for the greater part of the drama stands back a considerable distance from the line separating stage and auditorium, and is in the form of a Greek temple, being the only part of the stage having a curtain. In front is a spacious fore-stage, upon which the evolutions of the chorus, and also certain parts of the action, take place. At either side of this middle structure, which occupies about half the width of the entire stage, are open arches representing streets in Jerusalem, and these again are flanked by small houses with open loggia, approached by short flights of steps, and representing respectively the houses of Pilate and Annas. These five divisions form a slight curve, which is accentuated and completed by two short colonnades, and so brought up to the sides of the auditorium. As far as the actors and chorus are concerned it is still an open air performance, and the outlook of the spectator is almost the same as it would be at a completely open air performance, for he sees over the buildings on the stage the background of the Bavarian mountains—an advantage which seems to be somewhat unduly pressed.

In the early hours of the morning there is much ringing of bells, for all the performers attend Mass, as their preparation for the day. Then a little before eight o'clock cannon shots warn the audience to take their places, and then soft music re-sounds from the invisible orchestra. Towards the end of this prelude gradually appear the thirty-five "guardian spirits," who take up their positions

on the front stage. Such is its size that they stretch right across, with the space of a man's shoulders between each. The leader of the chorus steps into the middle and speaks—

Cast thyself down in holy awe,

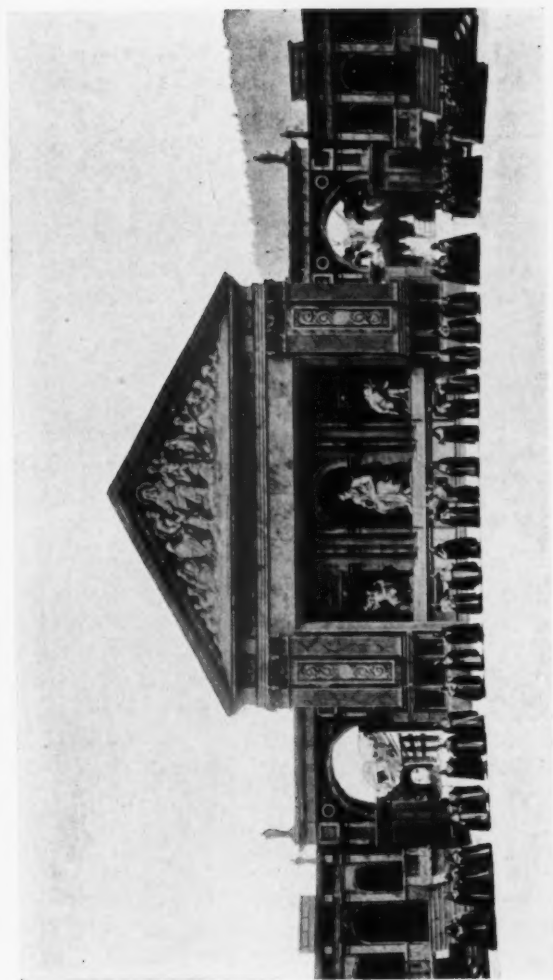
Race bowed down by the curse of God! etc.

The speaker is Joseph Mayer, who, at the last three successive decennial performances, has represented Christus. Ten years ago his long hair and beard were black, now, as his commanding figure stands in the centre of the chorus, they are perfectly white. Great sorrow has blanched them. It is no artificial change, for neither wigs, dyed hair, artificial beards, nor painted faces are permitted on the stage of the Passion theatre. Each act of the play is preceded by a *tableau vivant* from the Old Testament, having some more or less special appropriateness, and being intended as a type of the action of the play. So after the Prologue the curtain rises on the first tableau, the Expulsion from Paradise, which precedes the entry of the Redeemer into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and the Cleansing of the Temple. Here we have an example of the elaborate and artistic staging that contributes so much to the success of the whole play. The background represents the Garden of Eden, but the Ammergauers do not rest satisfied with a well-painted canvas. They arrange an exquisite vista of flowery and leafy abundance, all for the sake of the few seconds during which the tableau of Adam and Eve, the Serpent, and the Angel with the flaming sword, remains before the eyes of the audience. A second tableau is presented after a short interval, during which the Chorus sing, but instead of being Biblical, it is in a style recalling the curious doll and tinsel devices that one sees in modern Catholic churches and processions. The subject is the Adoration

of the Cross by Angels, and as the curtain falls the Chorus gives one of the prettiest of the choruses of the whole play:—

Follow Him who you hath reconciled,
Along the path, however rough and thorny;
For us He bled, for us He died,
For us He gained the victory.

The play proper then commences with the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem. Amidst the shouting of Hosannas, children carrying palm branches, and a motley crowd shouting for joy, Christ appears in the city riding on the foal of an ass. This triumphal procession enters from one of the side streets, and the crowd streams over the foreground. Christ dismounts amid the renewed cries of the people. It is a wonderful scene, so touching in its effect that it could scarcely be imagined more complete, and is a masterpiece of stage management, especially in the grouping and disposition of the crowds. The curtain of the middle portion of the stage is then raised, revealing the outer court of the Temple with money changers and sellers of doves, oxen, etc., who are then driven out by Christ. And here ensues one of those delightfully realistic touches which are peculiar to Ober-Ammergau. When Christ upsets the cages of doves, the sides fall and the doves fly out. As the whole action is in the open air the birds fly away quite freely, and thus the dismay and rage of the dealers finds a kind of expression more absolutely natural than one can hope to see on the ordinary stage. This incident is made to serve as the plot of the piece, for these dealers become the tools of the Sanhedrin in their hate of the man who has interfered with their unholy gains, and they afterwards instigate Judas to his awful treachery. So there arises a human object for the



From a Photograph.

THE PASSION PLAY AT OBERAMMERGAU.
The Stage showing the Chorus in position.

Passion, and it appears to follow this course all through, no supernatural machinery contributing anything to the development. Caiaphas and the other priests are represented as very ordinary types of character. They are hardened formalists, jealous of their authority, and nothing very bitter, malignant, or lurid appears in their behaviour until the scene when they relentlessly insist on the death of their victim. As the next scene is the plotting in the Sanhedrin, it is preceded by the tableau of Jacob's sons plotting to put their brother Joseph out of the way. The great Jewish Council is assembled under the presidency of Annas, an old man with snow-white hair, and of Caiaphas, a strongly-built, manly, resplendent figure, in horned mitre adorned with golden bells, his white tunic embroidered with gold and surmounted by a sumptuous robe. He delivered his words in a sweet, resonant and well-modulated voice. It must be confessed that the long council meeting became somewhat tedious, but at length the trial of Christ and his death is determined.

In order to prepare for the scene when Christ takes leave of his mother at Bethany, there are two tableaux—the first, the farewell of the young Tobias, and the second, the Bride laments the loss of her Beloved, taken from the Song of Solomon, and during the latter a beautiful soprano lamentation is sung. Then Christ appears in the street (the Jerusalem streets do duty) with Peter, John and Judas, to whom he announces that his hour has come. The scene changes to the house of Simon, when Mary Magdalene washes the feet of the Saviour. There is a good deal of unreality about this part of the play, but it is well redeemed, when, as Christ goes out, he meets his mother and takes farewell of her, an incident which fascinates the sympathy of the spectator in an

extraordinary manner. The effect is most touching, and many in the audience were moved to tears. The next type is a tableau of King Ahasuerus putting away Vashti, and making Esther his queen. The fulfilment is Christ on his way to Jerusalem, and Judas resolves to betray him. This scene is noteworthy because of the dramatic acting of Johann Zwink, a painter, who repeats his representation of the part of Judas of ten years ago. His was the finest piece of acting, as acting, in the whole of the performance, and the rendering of the character was quite a revelation. He makes Judas a sly, mean, twisted character, shrewd enough to perceive that there is bound to be a conflict between his master and the authorities, and so he considers he may as well feather his nest by accepting the overtures made through one of the dealers who was hurt by the cleansing of the Temple. He reveals in somewhat lengthy monologues the tortuous workings of a mind under the influence of greed and mean anxiety. He always feels that if his Master should prevail against the Sanhedrin, he could easily obtain his forgiveness. But he cannot get over the squandering of the Magdalen's precious ointment. He returns to the subject again and again, and the actor knows how to make the point tell.

The next act is the Last Supper, which is prefigured by two tableaux. The first one, the Fall of Manna, is much too crowded, as there are six hundred persons taking part in it, and the effect of the second, the Return of the Spies with the Cluster of Grapes, is only poor. In the Last Supper an attempt has been made to copy the famous picture by Lionardo da Vinci, but only with moderate success. The washing of the disciples' feet by Christ is generally considered one of the best scenes in the play, but it seemed to be somewhat ineffective. It

certainly is a powerful piece of symbolism, revealing the Divine Redeemer moving amongst his human disciples as "He that serves." The next tableau is the selling of Joseph by his brethren for thirty pieces of silver, which is of course the type of the betrayal of His Master by Judas for a similar sum. The meeting of the Sanhedrin at which the bargain is made is very dramatic, the action of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, in taking the part of Jesus, arousing the angry feelings of their fellow members and exciting a good deal of recrimination. Leading up to the Agony in the Garden and the Betrayal are two tableaux, the first entitled "Adam earns his bread by the sweat of his brow," being artistically arranged. Adam is working in the fields, boys are engaged in destroying thorns, whilst Eve is nursing her youngest child in the foreground. The second picture shows the Smiting of Amasa by Joab, who strikes him with a sword under pretence of giving him a kiss. The play then follows the familiar story of the Agony in the Garden, after which, with fine dramatic effect, Judas comes with soldiers and kisses his Master, who is then bound and led away. This concludes the first part of the performance. It is now mid-day, and an announcement is made that the second part will commence at one o'clock, so a hurried scramble has to be made for luncheon.

Part II opens with a tableau in which Micaiah the prophet is smitten on the cheek because he tells King Ahab the truth. The action of the play commences with Annas on the balcony of his palace making known his satisfaction to Judas, who thereupon hurries away in despair at the cruel result of his treachery. The soldiers bring Jesus bound before Annas, and, after being ill-treated, he is carried off on the left to Caiaphas. Before the trial by Caiaphas is represented there are two types

from the Old Testament shown in tableaux. Naboth condemned though innocent, on his knees awaiting his death, and Job on his dunghill mocked at by his wife and friends. Thanks to the fine presence and dramatic power of the representative of Caiaphas, the trial scene is very effective. Caiaphas gets into a rage, and rends his clothes, exclaiming "He hath spoken blasphemy, what further need have we of witnesses?" Christ is spit upon and buffeted. Then follows Peter's denial of His Lord, and lastly Judas appears, impelled by uneasiness of mind, and hoping that it will not come to the worst. His despair is prefigured by a tableau, showing Cain tormented by thoughts of Abel, whom he has slain. We again see the Sanhedrin, which confirms the sentence of death. Judas hears it. In a remarkably fine scene, full of the keenest dramatic power, he accuses himself of his guilt, asseverates the innocence of his Master, casts the thirty pieces of silver at the feet of his judges, and rushes out to the Potter's Field, where, just as the curtain falls, we see him almost in the act of hanging himself with his girdle.

A poor tableau gives Daniel falsely accused by the Princes, as the type of Christ before Pilate. Pilate sends Christ to Herod, who mocks him and arrays him in a robe, which was scarcely gorgeous, the type of this mocking being Samson leaning against the two pillars surrounded by the Philistines, who are making merry and jeering at him. Two tableaux—Joseph's coat sprinkled with blood brought to his father, and the interrupted sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham, but poorly prefigure Christ before Pilate, and the scourging. This act is only redeemed from failure by the strength of the impersonator of Pilate, Sebastian Bauer, the captain of the local fire brigade, who acted powerfully, and spoke his words with exceptional clearness. He makes the Roman character

of the governor stand out in very effective contrast to the Jewish element. That Roman sense of Justice—so strong that it still forms the basis of all civilized law—at first appears incarnate in Pilate. He has heard of Jesus, of the crowds brought together by his teaching and healing, but has heard no tales of any mischief done by his followers. The notion of condemning a man to death because he styles himself the "Son of God" strikes him as grotesque. Ultimately, more in contempt for the whole tribe of the Israelites than in strict justice, he gives way, publicly washes his hands of the whole affair, breaks his rod, and pronounces sentence. The representation and marshalling of the shrieking mob before Pilate's palace, clamouring for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Christ, was admirable, although Munkacsy's, Doré's, and other artists' conception of this part of the tragedy seemed more harmonious with one's preconceived ideas.

The "Via Dolorosa" is prefigured by two types—first, Isaac as a victim for sacrifice ascending Mount Moriah laden with wood; and second, Moses lifting up the brazen serpent in the Wilderness, the latter spoilt by an incongruous background of Egyptian pyramids. After the chorus, the curtain rises. From one side approaches Mary, the women and John; from the other issues a great, noisy crowd, followed by a procession, at the head of which is a centurion with his cohort. Then the figure of Christ bowed down with the weight of his cross, under which at length he falls. Simon of Cyrene is compelled to bear it for him, the procession slowly passing on. Christ meets the women of Jerusalem, and Veronica offers him her handkerchief. Mary laments for her son, and John endeavours to comfort her. It is in this scene that Anton Lang's impersonation of the character of

Christ excels. He gives a noble and entirely worthy representation of the part, although he seems to lack the power of combining majestic and kingly bearing with exquisite gentleness of manner. In personal appearance he is singularly well adapted to the part. There is a striking resemblance to the traditional Christ in his fine and delicate features, a resemblance borne out by his beard and long hair.

Before the awful scene on Golgotha the Chorus enters, robed in black, wearing girdles and sandals. Their fillets are adorned with black wreaths. The leader again speaks a prologue, during which are distinctly heard from behind the scenes the blows of the hammer by which the nails are driven into Christ's hands and feet. The curtain is raised and reveals the Place of a Skull. The two thieves are already hanging on their crosses, with their arms over the cross bars. Christ still lies on the ground, but already nailed to the Cross, which is slowly raised and placed in position. For twenty minutes he is thus held suspended between heaven and earth, but to the agonised spectator the time appears infinitely longer. The bystanders and priests mock him, the soldiers cast lots for his garments. He thirsts, he agonises, and at last, with the cry of "It is finished!" he bows his head and expires. The earthquake follows and strikes terror among the crowd, and the centurion makes open confession of his belief. Then a very painful scene is enacted when the body of Christ is taken down, and wrapped in a clean linen cloth, but the laying of it on the knees of his mother seemed to draw out the pent up humanity of the vast audience in one faint, subdued sigh of pity, mingled with sobs and tears. The concluding scenes of the entombment, resurrection, and ascension were hurried over with more speed than they deserved. Still no one appeared

to regret this, for the great human interest in the play seemed to have exhausted itself at the culmination of the tragedy on Golgotha. Nor can it be said with truth that the resurrection and ascension scenes were particularly effective. Still they were necessary to complete the story of "The World's Greatest Tragedy."

[HORACE, Ep: I: ii., 39-42.]

Dimidium facti qui coepit habet ; sapere aude :
Incipe. Qui recte vivendi prorogat horam,
Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis : at ille
Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis aevum.

The task's half-finished that is once begun.
Dare to be wise ; begin : he who puts off
The hour when he shall try to live aright
Is like the clod who waits on river bank
Till the stream stops—the stream that constantly
Voiceful rolls on, and flows for evermore.

—H. E. Campbell.



JANE AUSTEN AND THE NOVEL.

BY EDMUND MERCER.

WHATEVER that strenuous period spanned by the life of Jane Austen may have produced in other branches of literature it was certainly not prolific in novels. And out of even this sparsity not more than a score repay with enjoyment the time spent in their reading. Six of these were from the gentle Jane's pen; three of them excellent, and one unparalleled to this present. I will risk a conviction of ignorance in the confession that I know of no better novel of its class than "Pride and Prejudice;" a confession which may perhaps be justified in the sequel.

The characteristic of Jane Austen's stories most striking to one at first thought is their curious detachment from the cataclysmic history making in the great world outside her village home at Steventon during her whole life. Born in the year of the American revolt against English rule, and dying shortly after the political stage of Europe had been cleared of the last threads of the great Autocratic web which Spider Napoleon had spun over every country on the Continent only to be swept away with their spinner into a dim out-of-sight corner of the earth, Jane Austen's life passed in the most exciting epoch in the history of the

civilised world. Through the two American revolts, the French Revolution, the Régime of Bonaparte, the Peninsular War, the continuous wrestle of armies on land, and the sweeping of hostile navies off the waters, and the culmination of all this strife in the great holocaust of Waterloo, Jane Austen lived her even life, and wrote her pleasant, gentle stories—the harvest of a quiet mind—not unknowing but ignoring the tumult as outside her world. If she knew anything of the dread and courageous preparations of the English people as the shadow of Napoleon loomed large at Boulogne, none of her characters exhibit the slightest knowledge of such things. They all live in a world of their own outside this or any other where real events can happen. They are not unreal, but their world has no history, no parliament, no kings nor queens, nor perceptible rulers, nor representatives of any kind of government—not even policemen. Indeed they are unnecessary in the world of Jane Austen's creation. I cannot call to mind any transgression sufficient to command a legal remedy, unless the jilting of Marianne Dashwood by Willoughby may be considered as providing sufficient material for a suit for breach of promise, or the abduction of Lydia Bennet by Wickham as affording ground for a criminal prosecution. In the latter case I doubt whether truly the abduction were Wickham's offence: I should say he acted under compulsion from the lady, if indeed it was not she who abducted him, for men are weak and inoffensive creatures in such matters. No; impoliteness to the laws of any land forms no part of Jane Austen's plots; nor does even her most vicious character exhibit his or her failings in a worse light than by an unintelligent disrespect towards certain of the milder commandments, the punishments appended to which are rather social than legal. The most appalling

crimes committed are merely outrages against good manners; not always the manners of true gentleness either, but more often those prescribed by the semi-intelligence of a dull-witted country society for the government of a witless following of snobbery. To true good manners Jane Austen bows; her ladies and gentlemen, be they of any class soever, are always gentle folk. On the other hand, her *quasi* gentle folk, gentle only by virtue of wealth or title, are generally the more badly behaved, not from want of knowledge of manners but from lack of good breeding, and the genial Jane invariably defeats their pet schemes and exhibits their shrewishness at a time the most fitting for their downfall. The most exalted sprig—branch, one might say—of titled nobility in her stories is the large and equine Lady de Bourgh, the relict of a noble Lord of some category or other, who rampages through the pages of "Pride and Prejudice" on a blind, wild,—but (to the reader), infinitely amusing—career of gratuitous verbal insult; though to her sycophants and tenants she is so exceeding kind that one fancies they may not have a cold, or even die and be buried without her gracious leave. Below her in official rank we have a sprinkling of Baronets and Knights followed by representatives of County Families and Landed Gentry, Clergy, and other professional men and all the usual society of the English country side with which Jane Austen herself was most familiar. The scenery of her stories is always in the neighbourhood of some small English country town—a landscape which she depicts from personal knowledge—with occasional peeps at London and Bath, in which cities she is so little at home that we feel uncomfortable until we are with her in her country once more. This was the scenery and society to which she was life long accustomed. Living in her rural rectory within easy

reach of a provincial town of small extent, her neighbours were the large landed proprietor and M.P., the small variety of the same, clergymen and their families, military and naval officers of good family, and other people not of good family, retired tradesmen and independent yeomen, with their "womenkind," as Monkbarns called them. And of these, in various strengths and mixtures, she concocted her novels; the women-folk in quantity sufficient to be taken as the basis of the different brewings. To term them lovephiltres is not out of the way, matrimony being their aim and purpose; matrimony undisguised, without heroism or any element of tragedy or pathos, sentimentality or romance. But Jane only follows her own genial observation of the generality of women about her. Her own personal views of marriage seemed limited to the wish—expressed no doubt in jest—to have been Mrs. Crabbe, because she was so fond of the intense reality of the poet's pictures and the exquisite finish of his detail; merely a literary sympathy, dangerous to wed upon. The middle class women of her day as she sketches them, lived a quiet, opulent life, with a capacity for extracting intense enjoyment out of the veriest trifles, and a power of interesting but uninforming tattle all round the suburbs of any subject with as much chance of getting at it as a moth at the moon. Physically, and on the whole, morally healthy they do not talk religion because they do not think it—even in church which is but a watershed of innumerable rivulets of gossip; and attendance there at even the seasons when streams of scandal run dryest, at least a relief from a round of social and domestic duties which are performed, less from principle, than from a fear of greater monotony. With lives so uneventful, exempt from either mental or moral struggles, devoid of any thrilling incident, marriage,—

with money if possible; if not, all the same, marriage—is their inexhaustible bottle of excitement. It is their trade; whether it be their business or that of someone else matters not. They mind it just the same. They get married themselves, and if daughters are born their infants' matrimonial prospects are debated upon with as much determination and acrimony as though the interval from the long clothes of babyhood to the long skirts of young ladyism had been passed in the discussion. There is no stalking in the game. The hunt is quite open. If a male stranger arrives with any apparent design of staying in the neighbourhood more than four-and-twenty hours, he is a Mormon in no time, since every mother around has in her mind married him to her own daughter.

In Jane Austen's hands all this is far from monotony or repetition. She treats her world kindly, genially, and without a trace of cynicism. Too clear-sighted for error, she loves the lovable, and has even something apologetic in her condemnation of the vicious. Her fund of humour is too full for the least sentimentality; and whilst she is satirical on vulgarity of the mean kind, she merely amuses herself with that of good-nature. She has no style, distinctive literary style, that is; what woman has? Her diction might be the King's English of yesterday; save for the purity of its expression and the absence of slang and misplaced foreignisms, it is barely distinguishable from that of the lighter lady novelists of last week. And she is never dull nor didactic, nor does she try to teach you anything. I do not wish to infer that if you are sufficiently unlearned to go to her seeking instruction you will fail to find some, or that, if your manners are reasonably uncouth, somewhat of correction may not be acquired from her. You must help yourself; she will force nothing upon you. You may have the preserve without the

powder, the sweetness without the light, if you desire. Should you seek a theological tractate you must look elsewhere. The absence of any scheme of political philosophy may disappoint you. She does not pose as a regenerator of society, or readjuster of the relation of the sexes; and as a moral disciplinarian she may be reckoned a downright failure. If your appetite is for any of these things, there are numerous writers alive (women, too, most of them) who will supply you with all—nay, even if you are very avid, more than you can well swallow. Without a distinguishing manner of expression, devoid of plot or exciting incident, her novels merely the records of every-day people in ordinary surroundings, one wonders where Jane Austen's special excellences lie. We find one in her simple following of Hamlet's advice to the player; though Jane's mirror, albeit large enough for her, was an exceeding small one. "A perfect novel," she says, in one of her rare moments of self-expression, "is a work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its vanities, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language." From a critic this definition would come with the windiness of didactics; from the novelist herself it is a gift to her censors of a lash wherewith they might chastise her. Her security lies in her sincerity. Her faith in her opinion being evidenced by her works (I have no intention of venturing into exegesis), none of which has any manner of relation to that mule-book—the "novel-with-a-purpose." Her main idea is to tell a story; to begin at the beginning and finish at the end. That her opinion is founded on good literary sense is assured by the longevity of her novels, and their popularity among all classes of her own time,

and the high place they occupy in the more thoughtful, the more discriminating, even the more exacting and critical minds of our own day. To say they are popular now is inadvisable. These clever and fascinating stories, written for the pure love of writing honestly and well, without the least thought or need of pecuniary return, and obtainable after a hundred years' existence, as easily as and more cheaply than the latest ephemera, deserve better than this at our hands. They need not be weighed in the same balance as the newest caricature of life and religion, whose chief claim to popularity seems to be that, like waste paper, it is sold by the ton. A further excellence is her natural delineation of character—without emphasis, affectation, or straining after effect. Scott, a competent judge, was much struck by this. Writing of Miss Austen, shortly after her death, he discriminates very neatly between her method and its antithesis, his own :—“That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements of feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting for the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me.” She, with the perspicacity of sane genius, had much the same view of her own work, expressed in one of her letters (of which Scott, when he wrote the foregoing, had no knowledge). “What should I do,” she wrote, “with your strong vigorous sketches, full of variety and glow? How could I possibly join them on to the little bits (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush as produces little effect after much labour?” Instinctive thus in recognising her limitations and wise in not outstripping her instinct, she has maintained her originality

and imitates none but herself. Even royal flattery could not induce her to write contrary to her instinct. In spite of having published her novels anonymously, owing, perhaps, to the feeling that, in her day, a woman writing a book overstepped the limitations of her sex, her secret was discovered by one of the Prince Regent's physicians, who waited upon her to inform her that his Royal Highness kept a set of her novels in each of his residences, and Mr. Clarke, his librarian, added that she was at liberty to dedicate her next novel to him. "Emma" was, therefore, dedicated to condescending royalty; but Mr. Clarke's hint that an historical romance, illustrative of the august house of Hanover "would just now be very interesting," induced from Jane nothing but a squib "plan of a novel according to hints from Various Quarters." It is said that His Highness was very fond of her novels, hence his many duplicates. But in view of the foregoing incidents I ask two questions: Had His Highness read them? or was his librarian a fulsome ass? The *Quarterly* was also of Miss Austen's opinion; and in one of the few encomiums it passed upon her work it remarks: "The author's knowledge of the world and the peculiar tact with which she presents characters that the reader cannot fail to recognise, reminds us somewhat of the merits of the Flemish school of painting. The subjects are not often elegant and certainly never grand, but they are finished up to nature, and with a precision which delights the reader. Upon the whole, the turn of this author's novels bears the same relation to that of the sentimental and romantic cast that cornfields and cottages and meadows bear to the highly-adorned grounds of a show mansion, or the rugged sublimities of a mountain landscape." But even here there is the condescending tone that damns with faint praise. The reviewer had rather have

the romantic, the sentimental, and the picturesque, as understood in his day. It was a cult and a cant of the fiction of the time, that to be natural was to be "vulgar" and "ungenteel"; hateful words! However brutal in its outspokenness, it was fashionable for review language to be—that of the novelist must be a bastard English—more bastard than English, let us say. Take any one of the dead-and-gone stories of, for instance, the Countess Blessington, and read not merely the twaddling dialogue (which might be a feature possibly of the characters speaking), but the descriptions of scenery, or the background of the action, which represent the author's own ideas of language, and you will at once realise why they are, like a man with the burden of a dozen Christian names, too overweighted to succeed in the literary race. To understand them their readers must not be merely polyglots; it is necessary for them to know the bad grammar of various tongues, in order to recognise the intentions of a variety of misquotations. Should they have learned simple English only, it will require something of effort—in turning the pages of a dictionary—to follow a writer who prefers "nebulous atmosphere" to "cloudy sky," or a "perverter of truth," or "purveyor of falsehood" to plain "liar," and who will never use a simple phrase if a complex one can be found or made. Most of the novelists of her class—and they were, in proportion, many in the early years of the nineteenth century—wrote anonymously: whether from modesty or shame it matters not. But it was as well: for name or no, the moment the utterly absurd fashion of "fancy" English died out, the pages of their works—three volumes, cloth, octavo—were very handy as curl-papers and doubtless lasted a considerable time. As novels they were as fashionable as atrocious, and are now

as dead—as crinolines. It is not surprising, when the majority of novels were of this class, and nearly all the really good fiction of the time too coarse for general reading, that some Quarterly Reviewer should in 1815 fix “Tom Jones” and “Peregrine Pickle” as his standard novels and damn all others. His haste was in general excusable; but all men are not liars, and there are some strong novels among the general debility. His style and tone were that of the prig and pedant who fixed his standard and would enchain all minds to it. He was, however, a literary Ancient Pistol, and his valour was only equal to insinuating, in unpardonable impertinences, the mental weakness and moral meanness of novel readers in general. We have this Superior Critic with us yet: a self-enthroned Jove with paper thunderbolts and evacuations of printer’s ink. The observations from the Review referred to are interesting since they were written upon “Emma,” and would be an insult to even an unworthy novelist. “There are,” I quote, “some vices in civilised Society so common that they are hardly acknowledged as stains upon the moral character. . . . One would almost think that novel-reading fell under this class of frailties, since among the crowds who read little else it is not common to find an individual of hardihood sufficient to avow his taste for these frivolous studies. A novel, therefore, is frequently “bread eaten in secret.” Such is the universal charm of narrative, that the worst novel ever written will find some gentle reader content to yawn over it rather than to open the page of the historian, moralist, or poet. When we consider how many hours of languour and anxiety, of deserted age and solitary celibacy, of pain and poverty, are beguiled by the perusal of these light volumes, we cannot austere condemn the source from which is drawn the alleviation of such a portion of

human misery, or consider the regulation of this department as beneath the sober consideration of the critic." Side by side with this let us place the criticism of Macaulay, who, with a boldness born of his favouritism in Jane Austen's behalf, goes even further than Scott. Discussing the delineation of characters as opposed to caricatures, he places her—"Shakespeare," he says, "has no second"—not second, but nearest to Shakespeare. "She has given us a multitude of characters, all in a certain sense commonplace, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminate from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings. . . . And almost all this is done by touches so delicate that they elude analysis, that they defy the power of description, and that we know them to exist only by the general effect to which they have contributed." In his journal he also wrote, "I have now read once again all Miss Austen's novels, charming they are. There are in the world no compositions which approach nearer to perfection." "If I could get materials I really would write a life of that wonderful woman, and raise a little money to put up a monument to her in Winchester Cathedral." This is truly the other extreme, and only twenty years later than the *Quarterly*, but of the two I prefer the appreciation.

Jane Austen's literary life before the public was but seven years long. It matters little when she wrote her novels, we date from their earliest publication—from "Sense and Sensibility" in 1811 to "Persuasion" in 1818, the year after her death, with their intermediates, "Pride and Prejudice," "Northanger Abbey," "Mansfield Park" and "Emma." Her contemporaries range from Walpole (whose "Castle of Otranto," however, preceded her birth by a decade) to Mary Shelley of Fran-

kenstein fame. Among the more prominent we find Mackenzie with his "Man of Feeling," Mrs. Inchbald, Miss Burney, Radcliffe the Terrific, Miss Edgeworth, Scott, Jane Porter, Miss Ferrier, Lady Morgan, Hook, Beckford, "Monk" Lewis, Amelia Opie, Morier, Grattan, and the Countess of Blessington. Out of this selection an amusing, because indiscriminating, literary history of my acquaintance, after giving Sir Walter a chapter to himself, and singling out Henry Mackenzie, Miss Burney, Miss Edgeworth, John Galt, and Mrs. Trollope for special distinction, relegates their most excellent mistress to two lines in a supplementary list. Even the old *Quarterly*, to whom criticism—or, I had rather say, reviewing—and damnation were often synonymous, condescended (I doubt whether the writer is the one I have already quoted) to consider her as worth a better place than this. "Keeping close to common incidents and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of such spirit and originality, that we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events arising from the consideration of minds, manners, and sentiments greatly above our own. In this class she stands almost alone, for the scenes of Miss Edgeworth are laid in higher life, raised by more romantic incidents and by her remarkable power of embodying and illustrating national character."

We have so many varieties of novel that an undiscerning comparison of any one with any other is but energy in a wrong place. A preference for distorted history is not likely to prepossess a reader in favour of equally perverted society manners, though conversely it is not out of the way to think that anyone with a relish for the perennial lachrymosity of "The Man of Feeling," or the Gloomy Radcliffe, may revel in the "Agonies of

Beelzebub." Such a one, for instance, as the present day successor to Catherine Morland in "Northanger Abbey":

"But, my dearest Catherine, have you gone on with Udolpho?"

"Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke, and I am got to the Black Veil!"

"Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh, I would not tell you what is behind the Black Veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?"

"Oh, yes! quite. What can it be? But do not tell me. I would not be told on any account. I know it must be a skeleton. I am sure it is *Laurentina's* skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book. I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for the world."

It is futile to parallel Jane Austen with Sir Walter Scott in detail: but there are several novelists of the time a comparison with whom may assist us to an estimate of her position in her own day. Mrs. Inchbald was more of a playwright than novelist, and of her best novel which is scarcely long enough to merit the name, the "Simple Story," Maria Edgeworth said that was the most real she had ever read, and Maria's father gave it as his opinion that it was "better than Maria's or any other writing," but when these encomiums were pronounced Jane Austen had not begun to write her first novel, "Pride and Prejudice," the publication of which was delayed for seventeen years. Miss Edgeworth herself could not vie with Jane Austen. She errs on the side of didacticism, sentimentality—a thing Miss Austen loathed—and romance. About her work is the air of the lecture hall and school-room, and a self satisfaction expressive of the study as if

she were saying to herself while she wrote: "That's a fine sentiment," "this is well expressed," "the other is well invented." "Her art is too apparent" says one of her. "The follies and vices of the actors bring them too regularly to ruin. They act in circumstances arranged for them, and do not, as in Shakespeare, produce the circumstances in the development of their characters." The same *Edinburgh Review* that criticises Miss Edgeworth shows (to me at least, to whom every obvious preaching-and-teaching novel is an offence) in a review of Miss Austen, purely by accident, the superiority of the latter. "Miss Edgeworth is eminently an utilitarian, and always sets plainly before us the practical bearing of such or such line of conduct with a view to some useful end. Everything is omitted that is not controvertible to this purpose; and the glowing pictures with which other novelists try to embellish their fictitious territory are by her appropriated to a more homely but profitable culture." Of Miss Austen the *Review* says that she has never been "as popular as she deserves to be. Intent on fidelity of delineation and averse to the common-place tricks of her art, she has not, in this age of literary quackery, received her reward. Ordinary readers have been apt to judge of her as Partidge in Fielding's novel judged of Garrick—She was too natural for them. It seemed to them as if there could be very little merit in making people act and talk so exactly like the people they saw round them every day. They did not consider that the highest triumph of art consists in its concealment, and here the art was so little perceptible that they believed there was none."

The only novelist of the time on the same plane with Jane Austen, was her favourite author Frances Burney, whose works doubtless inspired Jane to try her own pen, with little thought that she would surpass her teacher,

Miss Burney's immediate success arose from the fact, not merely that she could tell a lively story of fashionable life, but that she could run over the scale of social manners without licentiousness and yet retain the verisimilitude of her characters. Richardson was voted dull, and Fielding and Smollett were at the worst "unladylike." The work of a writer who could be as joyous and sparkling and nature-true as they, without even a suggestion of their coarseness was assured of a welcome, and more so, as most of the other novels of the time that were not too improper were such wretched farragos of stilted sentimentality and high-flown commonplace as to be unreadable by any one with a respect for their own intelligence. The superiority of Jane Austen to her only real predecessor is not that of acquirement or achievement so much as of temperament. Similar in their methods of story telling, alike in their ideas of humour and the true function of the novel—"all for your delight," quoth Quince—keen in observation and skilful in penning the results of it, Jane has the more delicate mind of the two, and it affects her work to its advantage over Miss Burney's. Where the wit and humour of the latter are fine, Jane's are a thought more subtle; the observation of the one is a hair's breadth less keen than that of the other, while the literary expression of the younger writer has the advantage of a quarter of a century's advance in education and ideas. I do not recollect that Macaulay in his essay on Madame d'Arblay compared her with Miss Austen, though, inferentially (the already quoted opinion being from that review) he places her somewhere lower, since the later novelist comes, as he observes, "nearest to Shakespeare."

Madame De Staël pronounced Jane Austen's writings *vulgaires*. I do not translate this word by the obvious "vulgar," but would rather say "commonplace." I infer

they were not sufficiently exciting nor immoral for Madame. Her taste was rather for Gallic licentiousness, if we would look upon her own "Delphine" as a type of her preference. Which novel Sydney Smith characterised as being "An attack upon the ten commandments, and calculated . . . to enforce . . . the benefits of adultery, murder, and a great number of other vices which have been somehow or other strangely neglected in this country, and too much so (according to the apparent opinion of Madame de Staël) in France . . . The badness of the principle is alone corrected by the badness of the style, and this celebrated lady would have been very guilty, if she had not been so very dull." So much for Madame de Staël.

Jane Austen's novels stand on the highway of fiction half-way between those of Fielding and to-day. Although so far above any contemporaneously published works of the class (excluding, naturally, those of Scott and Miss Edgeworth) they do not specially mark an epoch in the history of the novel written by women. (Let me say here, in parenthesis, that I am merely comparing one woman's novel with another, without any intention of disparagement or reference to the position of women as compared with men in literature.) Their tentative manner of publication, their anonymity, and the modest retirement of their author, precluded a following, and their absolute naturalness, the main element of their writer's genius, forbade imitation among a class of writer's whose language was a hybrid of English and Pedlar's French, whose ideas were limited, and who were continually on speaking terms with bad grammar without knowing it. This foolish fashion, encouraged by the circulating libraries, existed till the stirring days of the Indian Mutiny, at which time it disappeared for ever. George Eliot,

Charlotte Brontë, Geraldine Jewsbury, Miss Muloch, and others of less but worthy calibre, came into the arena in close proximity, and among them created something in novels more enduring than fashion. Not content with fancy sketches of imaginary high life for readers who were no less ignorant than the authors themselves, they, like Jane Austen, went direct to nature for their stories, high life or not, and writing what they knew from experience, at once raised the tone of fiction written by women from a false sentimentality to a real communion with the true pathos and humour of actual life. With few exceptions the stories of these writers are with us now, and among them Jane Austen has one of the highest places. In spite of Charlotte Brontë, who thought that Miss Austen was merely "shrewd and observant," she is, in the pure English tongue, in tone and thought, essentially modern. She pictured her own time with its absence of railroads and matches and its presence of watchmen, chariots, and bewigged outriders, its fashions of dress, manners, and conversation, with the evident sincerity of one who knew it from experience, and without any of the anachronisms of which an author writing of an earlier time is frequently guilty. Beyond this, and the references of her characters to then living authors as Byron, Scott, Cowper, and so forth, she is no more out of date than Shakespeare, Fielding, Scott, or Dickens, although, outside circles literary, it may not be the fashion to read her or them.

Her education befitted the daughter of a high bred cultured clergyman. Beyond the domestic lore which was then the chief part of every woman's learning (though unfortunately for many husbands of to-day it is considered undignified) and in addition to the general routine of woman's knowledge, she had the run of her father's

library with considerable time at her disposal. Acquiring so a thorough acquaintance with the English classics, with Richardson—whom she admired so much as almost to imitate; with Cowper—whom she loved in his poems and letters; with Crabbe—whom she, as I have said, loved more still; with Johnson—to whom she paid homage but did not follow; with Fielding—whose stories she liked, whose coarseness she despised; with Burney—who was to her almost another self; with Scott—whom she worshipped; with Byron—whose passion touched her closely; with all and sundry the authors whose names make so glorious a scroll; she could not fail to acquire that knowledge of her mother tongue which makes the reading of her limpid English so delightful.

She is said to have been a pretty woman; known for the sweetness of her disposition, her genial views of life, her gentleness towards the failings—not the vices—of others, her love of company and the simple pleasures current among a host of friends, her fondness for the simple songs of her time, even for mild flirtations. I can imagine her so; and it is possibly this personality merged in her works that has given so much delight to all readers who make their acquaintance. The secret of their value is perhaps that they are aromatic with the essence of confidential and sparkling letters from a charming woman to one's self.





THE OLD FORTUNE TELLER.

By ARTHUR W. FOX.

Not far from hence doth dwell
A cunning man, hight Sidrophel,
That deals in Destiny's dark counsels,
And sage opinions of the moon sells;
To whom all people, far and near,
On deep importances repair;
When brass and pewter hap to stray,
And linen slinks out of the way;
When geese and pullen are seduc'd,
And sows of sucking pigs are choused.

Butler.

IN many parts of Lancashire, so late as the latter half of the nineteenth century, strange survivals remained of an earlier and more superstitious time. Wise women of superior age and by no means inferior ugliness were consulted especially at, or just before, the birth of children. Astrologers had an overpowering influence, and spells are known to have been hung over the stalls of more than one mistal to preserve the kine from the malignity of witches. The cast shoes of a horse or an ass, or of both, adorned every stable for the same purpose, because these were the beasts attached to the manger in Bethlehem. Two desires seem

to have been foremost in the rustic thought : there was a wish to pry into the future, and a longing to seek protection from evil in the present. Sprigs of broom were worn in the clogs, twigs of rowan were carried in the purse, red worsted was wound round a baby's arm, not to distinguish him from a possible twin, but to prevent him from being "over-looked." In Barnton a host of similar old-world fashions were faithfully handed down from generation to generation.

Amongst the numerous professors of magic art, none had perhaps so great an importance as the possessors of those singular crystals which are said to present pictures of time—past, present, and future. Dr. Dee, nearly three centuries before, had used one of these mysterious sources of secret intelligence to his own profit, and to the pecuniary loss of his clients. The faith of mankind in what it does not thoroughly understand is commonly alike vast and resolute, and some men have the enviable capacity of inspiring this questionable virtue in others. Barnton had its wise-man-in-chief, whom some regarded as merely a wiseacre, which is both more common and not quite the same thing. In his earlier life, when he had first set up as a "fortin teller," the villagers had accepted his claims in good faith ; indeed they had been rather proud than otherwise of his gifts, and regarded him as one of their natural curiosities. But the prophet, according to time-honoured custom, had gradually grown into disrepute in his own country, and he had to trust to the neighbouring villages for a supply of credulous clients. Like many a politician of conservative leanings, he was wont to bewail those "good old times," when reforms were few and credulity was large. He had an unconcealed contempt for education, whether primary or secondary ; indeed he could not see its necessity. Had he himself not been able

to see the invisible without its aid, and what more could any man want? Besides it sorely interfered with his professional practice, and that in itself was enough to account for his unfavourable opinion.

Behind the Police Station, on a little knoll called Rose Hill, stood a number of long lines of sordid-looking red-brick houses, which had been built for the miners and their families. The hill itself had once been grassy and garlanded with wild briars, but the trampling of the clogs of the colliers and the pattering of the feet of the children had long given to it a partially bald appearance. Here lived a man of some interest to the police, though he was never disturbed by the officious attentions of any of those grim ministers of the law. The rows of houses had some pretence of comfort with considerable real shabbiness, and a long row at right angles to the rest had not even a pavement before its front doors. In the centre of this row lived John Bracken and Ann his wife. Though they were well known in Barnton—he from his mystic occupation, she from the no less useful and important calling of a casual midwife—if a stranger had asked for them by their “patronymic appellations,” he would have been met by stolid ignorance.

A neighbouring minister, who had not long settled in his parish, was taking round tickets for the Beauchamp Old Folks' Tea Party. He innocently inquired for John and Ann Bracken, whose names were on the list. After asking at every door on Rose Hill save two, by that perverse dispensation which impels an inquirer to begin at the wrong end of his investigation, he had utterly failed in his search. At last he stopped at a house next to an insignificant sweet-shop, and he put his question for at least the hundredth time with an air of over-wearied resignation. The good woman, who appeared in answer

to his knock, scratched her head like a superannuated monkey. Her object was doubtless different; she was scratching for ideas, while the monkey would be searching for the usual object of monkeys on such occasions. At length a flash of inspiration was the direct result of her excoriation. "Oh, aw know now," she exclaimed triumphantly, "it's Big Johnnie an' Tuffee Ann as yo're seechin'. They liven next dur yon rooad," pointing down the highway to Warley, and adding, as if by an afterthought, "bur 'e winnot sper fortins fur th' like o' yo'."

The little shop was nothing more than the front-room of a somewhat dingy cottage. The walls were adorned with a florid sampler, a pair of badly-cleaned pewter candlesticks hung up, one or two faded pictures of the nature of family portraits, and a mysterious astrological diagram, which Johnnie did not himself understand, though he often talked about it. A chest of drawers with a brown American-cloth cover and a large Bible thereon, four rickety rush-bottomed chairs, two similarly seated arm-chairs, a three-legged round table with a sort of shelf underneath it, which served the double purpose of supporting the fabric and of affording the cat a quiet resting place, a corner cupboard, a bread-creel, a pot-rack and a "winter-hedge" formed the furniture of the chamber. A few rough-hewn deal shelves warped by the sun and weighed down by their contents, ornamented with fly-blown and curiously cut pink paper, had been stretched across the window. On these were set, in order due, six meagre bottles clouded over with domestic vapours and containing respectively Pomfret cakes, mintdrops, pink and white, yellow and white sugar sticks, aniseed pipes and wondrously compounded cough drops. Beneath these scanty examples of the sweets of life stood two big

brown paper bags, containing Barcelona nuts and their oilier brethren from Brazil. In the space between them lay a dusty heap of wizened oranges, which never seemed to diminish, and which looked more like mummies than actual fruit. Once a week the mistress of these more or less succulent treasures made several tins of sallow-hued, dirty looking and impoverished sugar toffee, the delight of her younger customers and the origin of her nickname.

Tuffee Ann herself was a thin, upright, pinched old woman, with brown hair just lined with gray, with cheeks like streaky red apples, faded dark eyes, and a nose which betrayed a liking for cordials of another nature than the vigorous treacle-beer which she dispensed in its proper season. She said she "wur plagu't wi' wyind i' th' stummick." But eccentric habits are wont to be palliated by aerial excuses. She used her occasional midwifery and the products of her shop to add a few shillings weekly to the precarious earnings of her husband. She had plenty of customers for toffee, as the Sunday-bedabbled cheeks of the neighbouring urchins plainly showed. She looked half-starved, and she was subject to periodical fits of blues, a circumstance which may have accounted for the redness of her nose. She had implicit faith in the magical powers of "her mon," though that did not prevent her from giving him an occasional taste of her elocutionary rhetoric, and she was a useful decoy-duck to the more credulous.

Big Johnnie had not been nicknamed in vain. He was by nature a tall old man of fully six feet in height, who had lost several inches by an inveterate habit of stooping from his middle, as if he were perpetually on the point of sitting down. He was a noteworthy and conspicuous man in more ways than one. When he took his walks abroad, he wore on his always-wagging head an old fur

cap which kept a perpetual moulting season, with the ear-flaps hanging about his large red ears, and their strings hanging loosely over his shoulders. When he stayed in the house, his headpiece was a dusky red flannel skull cap, which from its infancy had been kept quite innocent of the wash tub, and consequently had attained a rich copper colour. His thin gray hair formed a fringe of elf-locks round the margin of the one or the other of these top coverings, and closely resembled the frayed edges of his coat sleeves. He was comparatively speaking clean shaven, though the ragged attempts of a dragged beard commonly bristled upon and under his strongly marked chin. His nose was thin and peaked, and of remarkable length, and every now and then his nostrils moved involuntarily like those of a rabbit. His cheeks, from infrequent soaping, were of an ashen gray colour. They were gaunt and sunken, and like his wide forehead, seamed and furrowed with many finely-cut wrinkles. His thin lips were tightly pressed across his almost toothless gums, and were usually drawn down into an expression of vast solemnity.

But his eyes compelled attention. They were so deeply set in their sockets that their object seemed to be the exact scrutiny of the inner lining of the back of his head. They were large and of a light and lustreless blue, almost the tint indeed of the edge of a slop of skim milk upon the kitchen dresser. Their expression was filled with far-off dreaminess, which was occasionally varied by a sharp glance of extreme cunning shot forth so suddenly as to be quite discomposing to its recipients. He looked out of the corners of these eyes like a cat, and he had the further feline habit of turning his eyes to save him the trouble of turning his head. His lashes were long and nearly white, which did not improve their appearance,

and his eyebrows were dusty gray and almost met over his nose. Altogether his was not an easily forgotten face. It had some resemblance to that of a corpse buried and dug up in a rather dirty condition, after having lain several years in the bare ground.

His garments exactly suited his face and figure. His trousers had some shreds left of the semblance of corduroy. There was a green patch on one knee, a blue patch on the other, and a red one of an ampler size in an appropriate place, where it was only rendered visible by the rude familiarity of the wind. This variety of colour was due to no artistic whim of his own, but to the decorative taste of his wife and to the exigencies of her stock of mending materials. He wore a long, drab, dirty overcoat, which may have been light brown on its birthday. Its collar had once been fashioned handsomely of brown velvet, but now its edges were frayed, its pile was gone, and its colour had changed into a delicate yellowish green. A wide open waistcoat lay beneath this upper garment in huge wrinkles, and a once blue check shirt might be seen both at its proper point of view and through each of its well worn button holes. Round his neck he wore a scarf not unlike a Minorca hen in colour, though what its original tints had been could not be divined. When he walked in his own shuffling gait and deliberate manner he leaned heavily on an ancient *Æsculapius* stick twined with two rudely carved and plump bellied snakes.

Remarkable as was the old man's general appearance, his feet literally forced themselves upon the notice of all who saw them by their magnificent proportions and their extraordinary angle of inclination one to the other. Not without reason did the villagers call him splay-footed. His monstrous shoes were alike wide and long. When they

were at rest they made almost a straight line, and when they were in motion their heels rubbed affectionately together. Johnnie never blacked these capacious shoes, nor did he require his wife to perform that humiliating office for him. They were brown with age, and tradition asserted that the shoemaker, who made them by contract, died from exhaustion. The feet, which the shoes contained, were the old man's idols and his bane. When the Barnton Co-operative Society, for some unknown reason, received several sample pairs of "sixteens" in clogs, the committee, with mischievous and appropriate forethought, at once sent the giants to Johnnie. He was not grateful for the unsolicited kindness, but forthwith ceased to be a member of the Society. It is strange in human life how seriously trifles are apt to disturb the serenity of grave minds, if indeed clogs of such proportions can truthfully be termed trifles.

During the long winter of 1879-80 snow lay on the ground for months, and the fields and roads of Barnton were covered from sight. The highway to Warley was trampled to the consistency and almost to the smoothness of ice, so that the children induced the blacksmith to affix "slides" to their clogs, and skated on their way rejoicing to school. Those who could not afford the luxury of skate irons of this kind made up for the deficiency by "slerring" along on the inside edges of their clog irons. In the midst of difficulties like the foregoing, Johnnie was shuffling along the road to his work at the pit, and the slippery ground tried alike his patience and the supporting power of the soles of his feet. Every boy who passed him saluted him with some playful allusion, which excited his wrath almost to boiling point. But they were far away before he could hit out at them with his stick, or arrange his leisurely ideas into a cutting

retort. Miserably he toiled and slipped about on the road, when suddenly a cherry voice close behind him sung out lustily, "Mornin', Johnnie, how arto like this cowl mornin'?"

It was a bright faced young collier who spoke, and his clean cut features were wreathed in a pleasant smile. He was on his way to his work, and he had long been a persistent persecutor of the venerable fortune teller.

"Mornin', Peter, is it thee?" was the old man's reply, cautiously spoken, but ill-conceived. "Aw'm noan so weel, this mornin'. Aw'm welly parisht wi' cowl, and th' lone's that slippy 'at aw con 'airdly stick up."

"Weel, Johnnie," was the instant and apposite reply, "aw dunnot know what's coomin' o'er thee. If thou cannot stick up wi' a' thy big feet, what mun aw do wi' my little uns?"

"Aw'll strike thee wi' this stick," exclaimed the old man, justly indignant, lifting his stick as he spoke and almost overbalancing himself on the causeway.

"Thou'do better t' keep thy stick t' stop thee fro' fa'in' o'er," retorted Peter; "an' aw doubt thou'll hev to shap better nor thou's done afoor, if thou'rt boun' t' catch me, owd slutter-feet. My clugs is little enoof t' look at; but they'll 'appen carry me quicker nor thy owd mowin' machines."

After he had fired this Parthian shot over his shoulder, Peter made off, singing gaily as he went. Johnnie stood for fully five minutes in the middle of the causeway, looking with a sullen scowl at the retreating figure of his adversary. He had no time to prepare a retort; great guns need much loading before they will go off, and Big Johnnie was a gun of this kind. So he shuffled along to his work, swaying his head from side to side and muttering vengeance like a toothless old hound growling over a

bone. It was not the first time by many that Peter had proved too much for the man of mystery, who had been compelled to content himself with the indigestible process of gulping down his spleen.

By and bye the schoolmaster overtook him, and greeted him with a cheery "Good morning, Johnnie; how are you this fine winter's morning?"

Warned by his previous experience not to be too communicative all at once, Johnnie made no reference to the state of the road. "Eh, Mester Loon, it's yo', is it?" he began, blinking at his companion out of the corners of his eyes. "Aw'm reet fain t' see yo'. Aw'm noan so weel, aw'm gettin' owd, yo' known, an' this 'aird weather dunnot shuit me. Aw've bin wantin' for t' see yo' fur iver so lung."

"What's the matter now, Johnnie?" was the wondering question. "I'm early this morning, so I can spare you a few minutes. Now you've got me at last, what can I do for you?"

"Weel, yo' known, Mester Loon," was the answer, drawled out in Johnnie's most measured tones, "aw connot reead nor write; aw leeav a' that to them as con; though mayby aw've gett'n a better yeadpiece nor yo' han."

"Come along, Johnnie," said the schoolmaster, by no means flattered by the old man's scant appreciation of his natural gifts; "out with it, what has your good headpiece to say to a fool like me?"

"Dunnot yo' be i' sich a 'urry, Mester Loon, nor stairt t' leep till yo're gett'n to th' stile," replied Johnnie, once more peeping slyly out of the corners of his eyes to see if his victim were attending with due respect. "Aw mun tak my own time, an' then aw con tell yo' what aw want'n t' speik t' yo' about. Aw want'n yo' t' talk t' yo'r schoo'-childer; they gett'n at the back o' th' cop, an' they shout'n my feet, an' they say'n 'at they favver two c'nel

boats teed eend to eend at oather side on a stump. They dunnot know as aw were runned down th' pit afoor aw were six year owd."

What Johnnie precisely meant by his last phrase was beyond the comprehension of the schoolmaster, who could scarcely repress a smile at the exact descriptive powers of his scholars. For a moment or two he wisely kept silent, until he had recovered his specific gravity. Then pulling himself together with some effort, he said, "I'm surprised at you, Johnnie; a man with so much better a headpiece than other folks shouldn't pay any heed to a parcel of children."

"That's a' vary well, Mester Loon, an' aw doubtno' as yo' mean kindly, but yo' wouldno' like it yo'rself, if yo' stood'n i' my shoon," rejoined Johnnie in a deeply injured tone, while the schoolmaster inwardly ejaculated, "The Lord forbid that I should ever stand in your shoes."

"But aw've noan finisht yet," continued the old man, "aw've a deal moor t' tell yo', if yo'll nobbut 'airken an' noan intherrupt me. Th' shameless young gomerils keeps on poppin' their nasty little yeads ivery day o' th' wick an' ivery neet at that into our Ann's dur-hole, an' they shout'n, Owd redcap, owd redcap, though they known weel enoof as aw've noan too mich yure upo' th' top o' my yead, an' aw've gett'n t' wear a red neet-cap fur t' keep my yead warm i' th' house. A wise mon mun keep 'is yead warm, or 'e'll loise 'is wisdom."

The simplicity of the old man diverted the schoolmaster not a little. He knew that it was not of the slightest use to persuade Johnnie to take no notice of the sharp wits of the children. Moreover he was perfectly aware of the offensiveness of the nickname of Owd Redcap; but he humoured him and said with an almost imperceptible smile lurking around the corners of his mouth, "Ill do my best,

Johnnie, to stop the children's tongues ; but you know I've very little control over them out of school hours. I should advise you not to heed them. They're only too ready to find by-names for cleverer folk than themselves."

Highly flattered by this adroit compliment to his mystical gifts, Johnnie answered with as much of a smile as he ever allowed to wreath his dignified countenance, "'Thank yo' kindly, Mester Loon; an' aw'll do as mich fur yo', if yo' iver gi'e my a chance, an' we niver known what may coom t' us. Aw'll let yo' look thruff my glass an' a', when yo'r passin' our rooad. Eh, bur it's rare an' wyindy t' day ; it welly minds me o' Wyindy Monday. Yo' dunnot mind that, aw doubt ; yo're mony sizes too young."

"No, I don't know anything about it, Johnnie, though I remember my grandmother telling about it, too," said the schoolmaster, hoping to draw his man out. "I wasn't born then, so I cannot well remember it ; tell me about it."

This was the invitation for which Johnnie had been angling. If there were anything save his fortune-telling, upon which he prided himself more than another, it was his skill in telling a tale. He cast one of his sidelong glances at his listener, to make sure of his careful attention, and punctuated all his sentences with his swaying head. "It 'appened i' eighteen hunderd and thirty, when aw were a young mon. It were th' year when they oppent th' fost railroad, moore shame for 'em, betwixt Monchester an' Liverpoo'. A greyt storm broke out a' o'er Lancashire, when aw were worthin' at th' Starvation Pits. Yo' known as they co'n it so, becose th' coal's that bad as it'll 'airdly leet i' a fire, or stop leeted when it's been onst kinled. Aw were nobbut a wattchmon, an' me an' another mon was cow'rin' o'er th' fire i' a cabin, an' keepin' oursel's as warm as we could. We'd gett'n our dinners lapped up i' two 'ankerchers wi' a sope o' coffee i' our cans, an' we'd 'ung'em up i'

th' riggin' o' th' roof-tree. A' on a sudden th' fire went spairk out, an' th' day growed as dairk as midneet afore it were noon. Th' wyind blew that 'aird 'at we couldno' ye'r owt; so we geet a reech o' bacco an' said nowt at th' same time. I' a bit me an' my mate geet fine an' 'ungry, an' we rayched out our 'onds to fot down our victual. We felt nowt nobbut wyind. We looked up a bit skeert like, an' at after we'd stared lung enoof t' peek into th' dairk sky, we fund as th' roofin' hed bin blowed reet off whole, an' hed let abune fifty yairds away. We tumbled out o' th' dur-hole stickin' tight howd tone o' tother, an' slutterin' along as weel as we could manitch. At after we'd seeched about a towthry minutes we leet upo' th' roof. We heyved it up o' th' one side, an' theer sure enoof were our victual as snug as if it hed bin i' bed, though the coffee were as cowl as a corpse."

"Come, come, Johnnie, you don't expect me to believe such a tale," replied the schoolmaster, shaking his head; "why, it's far-fetched enough to be one of the stories of Baron Munchausen."

"The tale may be fot fro' nigh, or it may be fot fro' fur, as yo' say'n, Mester Loon; an' it may favver one o' th' stories o' Barren Monchosen, though yo' mit ha'e sett'n it down to a mon wi' less on an outlandish name," was Johnnie's rejoinder, in a tone of measureless superiority. "Yo' 're quite welcome to tak it or leeav it, as yo' pleeas'n. But it's as thrue as dayleet fur a' as yo' con say again it. Great trees was rent up roots an' a', down th' rooad t' Warley; an' they was lyin that thick as yo' hed t' leap o'er 'em, same as a steeplechase upo' Newton Commin. Th' mill-chimbley upo' Beauchamp 'eath down yon were blowed up reet out o' th' ground, an' th' bricks was strown like pratoes i' th' diggin season. A' th' palins by Black's mill was throwed down, an' some on 'em was split fro' top to tail. Yo' may shap wi' my tale as yo' liken, fur a' 'at yo' ca'n it one o' Barren Monchosen's stories."

The schoolmaster had no time to argue the point of Johnnie's veracity, which indeed opened up a vast field for discussion. He had just reached the school, and he went in, leaving the old man under the firm conviction that education served no more useful purpose than to make young people exceedingly conceited and opinionative in the presence of their elders. There is something to be said from this point of view, and Johnnie had never had this particular story questioned before. Indeed, he had put the finish of pictorial embroidery to it by many previous narrations, and he told it with much vigour and dramatic power.

Simple as he was in some respects, the old fortune teller was shrewd enough in his profession of seer. He was the proud possessor of an egg-shaped glass or crystal, which would have filled the soul of the more famous Dr. Dee with envy. How he had come by it was not known, and he kept the secret to himself. He carefully locked his treasure up away from the common eye, and only produced it to satisfy a genuine inquirer. Through or in this wonderful glass it was his habit to look on behalf of his numerous clients, and according to his own story he could see strange, if not invisible, sights. Many people in the innocence of their hearts, came to consult him about missing children, who usually happened to find their way home during the interval of consultation, and so established the seer's credit upon a tolerably sure foundation.

Amongst the numerous inquirers into future possibilities were those young women who had not as yet secured lovers, and whose lonely hearts were looking longingly forward to a better state of things. Johnnie escaped from the clutches of the law by making no charge for his scientific pursuits; but he always expected a present from the gratitude of the truthseekers. However, one sad morning a young maiden, innocent enough in the ways of this world, but under the

influence of "a yearning after the ideal," came on foot from a distance of seven miles to consult the sage. What she expected to see was probably the wraith of her future lover; what she actually did see remains unknown, because she never breathed a syllable about the matter. Clearly she was satisfied; and when she was going away, she asked in a grateful tone, "Weel, Mester John, what mun aw pay yo?"

After his wont the reverend seer summoned up as much of a benevolent smile as his hard features could assume. "Aw mak no chairge," he said.

"Aw con but thank yo' kindly," she replied, with unaffected simplicity and unalloyed gratitude, and began her journey home.

Johnnie, for his part, cared little for gratitude; what he wanted was the more tangible offering of silver or gold. He stared for a few seconds at the retreating figure of the maiden. Then he pulled himself together, and before she was out of hearing, he shouted, "Dosto ye'r, no luck'll follow thee, withersoiver thou gooas!"

The colliers who knew the idiosyncrasies of the man, made great sport of his weakness, though he could afford to laugh at them on those occasions, when he had made several pounds in one week without any exertion on his own part. If he allowed an unbelieving person to look through his glass for a treat, his usual question was, "Weel, what done yo' see, owt or nowt?" When the reply was, "Aw con see nowt nobbut yo'r Tuffee Ann's yaller an' white sugar-sticks"; the invariable answer was, "Aw thowt as mich; thou'rt noan born under th' reet planet." It was not that he himself had any clear understanding of the astrological bearings of the planets; but he knew that he could count on like ignorance on the part of the sceptical fortune-seeker. It may be noted in passing that scarcely

any one in Barnton was born under "th' reet planet," and consequently scarcely any one saw anything in or through the mystic glass, except what was actually on the other side. Still, his neighbours held the old man in little respect. His feet were too large to secure that in any other place than the football field. Moreover, many stories of his simplicity were told against him and against his feet. One day, according to reliable and well supported testimony, he was "wortchin' down th' pit, an' sittin' down i' a pool o' wayter. As he were cowerd down using his pick t' bring down th' coal, he seed sommat black warstling like i' front o' 'im. 'e thowt it were a rot, an' 'e shouted, 'If t' cooms up agin, aw'st peyl thee o'er th' yead wi' my pick.' An' 'e did, an' 'e skriket reet out; fur 'e'd stricken one on 'is own feet fur a rot." Who could respect even a seer, against whom such a story could be told, and what is more believed?

Besides, Johnnie had played more than one trick upon several of the miners, each of whom was eager to exact a full revenge. By some means he had succeeded in drawing five shillings and a pint of fourpenny from Owd Hundert, the leader of the Parish Church choir, who was notoriously niggardly of anything save abuse and double bass. The child of this musical autocrat had gone astray, and he sought information from the magic crystal without gaining any tangible results. Hence he made up his mind "fur t' tak it out o' Johnnie," as soon as a favourable opportunity occurred. He did not mean of course to take the crystal out of its owner's inside, since he himself, if anyone, had swallowed it and its delusions. The two men worked in the same shift at that time, and the singer took his cronies, who used to stand him drinks, into his confidence in the little bar parlour of the Dog and Dutch Oven. There were five of them in addition to himself, namely, Owd Bill Rantipole,

a "jined Methody," who had no objection to a chirping cup now and then, Muckie Dynault's dowter's lad, Bill o' Jack's o' Baconswoard, Sam Cinderworrier, and his brother Young Hundert.

Owd Hundert opened the case magisterially with a brief statement of his grievance. "Now, yo' chaps, yo' a' on yo' known how Big Johnnie sarvt me anent our little Dick," he said, following his words with a long and deep draught.

"Ay, we known weel enoof," was the general response, accompanied by the treble obligato of a shrill remark from Young Hundert, "An', sarve thee reet fur bein' sich a foo' t' hev owt t' do wi' a great bletherin' founmart like yon."

"Thee 'ush thy din, or aw'st 'appen por thy rops out," answered Owd Hundert, with crushing dignity. "Maybe, aw were a foo' t' gooa t' a mon like yon. But that's noather heer nur theer, an' aw'm boun' fur to sarve him out shoshow-tis. Now aw want'n yo' chaps t' lay yo'r yeads together an' 'elp mo t' leet upo' summat as'll vex him gradely."

"West a' 'elp thee, if thou winnot do 'im no 'arm," put in Owd Bill, gently.

"Whooa said owt about armin' 'im?" asked Owd Hundert, sternly. "Thou knows me weel enoof, Bill, as aw cannot drown a kitlin' o' mysel', an' aw'm noan gooin' fur t' 'urt 'im. Bur aw'd be fain to shew 'im up a bit."

"Aw'll tell yo' what we mun do," broke in Muckie Dynault's dowter's lad, eagerly; "we mun steal summat o' his'n, an' hud it somewheer, an' ax 'im t' find it. Yo' known 'at 'e's gett'n a glass, an' what's sauce fur other folk mun be sauce fur hissen."

"Thou'st shapped it gradely, owd lad," shouted the conspirators, gleefully. "We'st set th' job a kinlin' t' morn. Eh, bur it'll be a gradely dooment, that it will."

The following morning the miners went down the pit as usual, with their unsuspecting victim in their midst. When

they had taken their places in the cage, Sam Cinderworrier whispered to Owd Hundert, "Thee leeav it to me; aw'll manitch it gradely; an' by th' mass Johnnie'll lowf upo' th' wrung side o' 'is tato-trap fur a twothry weeks."

The cage descended into the darkness, and amid the noise of the descent Sam contrived to steal Johnnie's watch out of his pocket. He hid it carefully in his own, and chuckled to himself as he thought of his plan. When the men reached the bottom of the pit, they had a long way to go to their particular working. Johnnie shuffled along as usual grumbling all the way down the gallery through the four-foot seam. A sudden thought struck Sam, and he said, in his most insinuating tones, "Heer, Johnnie, owd brid, lend me howd o' thy pick an' thy baggin,' aw'll 'elp thee wi' 'em to th' workin'."

Suspecting nothing, Johnnie gave his pick and the huge handkerchief, containing his dinner, to Sam, who fell quietly back for a few minutes. He untied the handkerchief, which wrapped up a basin quite filled with a mighty potato pie. Sam worked round the edges of this mammoth in pastry with his clasp-knife in a careful and workmanlike manner, and when he found that the top-layer was comparatively dry, he inserted the watch on a piece of "skirtin'," and tied up the handkerchief once more with exact care. The whole of this delicate operation had taken but a few moments, and he set off after his companions, whose Davy-lamps he could see in the distance glittering like glow-worms. He soon overtook them, for Johnnie travelled slowly, and he whispered his comrades, so that they might know what he had done. When they reached the working, they fell to work each in his proper place, the rest busily and Johnnie slowly, as befitted a man of his solemn pretensions.

After a few hours the old man's stomach warned him

that it was dinner-time. He put his hand into his pocket to take out his watch, and it was missing. He tried the other pocket with no better success. At length he began to suspect some trick, though, as none of the men had served him in such a way before, he was loth to accuse them. "Has ony on yo' lads seen my wattach?" he asked, anxiously, but pacifically.

"Whooa should ha'e seen thy wattach?" asked Sam, innocently; 'appen thou'st left it awhoam."

"Nay, aw hainnot," was the shortly spoken reply. "Aw niver leeav it awhoam. Aw cannot find it onywhere, an' aw know as aw hed it, when aw were coomin' to th' pit."

"Dosto think as ony on us 's gett'n it?" asked Owd Hundert. "Aw hannot fur one, so theer."

"Aw'm noan sayin' as ony on yo's gettin' it, an' aw'm noan sayin' as yo' hannot, mind that," said Johnnie. 'Yo' con 'elp me t' seech fur it, aw reckon, shoshow."

"Oh, ay, owd brid, we'st 'elp thee an' welcome; wheer dosto think thou'st putt'n it?" was the ready answer.

"How con aw tell yo' that?" replied Johnnie, pettishly. "If aw knowed wheer aw'd putt'n it, aw should noan be axin' yo', as aw knows on."

"Thou'rt i' th' reet on't theer, owd Cock Robin," said Bill Rantipole. "But thou'st no need t' get thy rag out; thou'll spile its colour, if thou does."

The men began to look for the missing watch with feigned diligence, though they could not refrain from giving one another sly nudges and imperceptible winks. Sam Cinderworrier took good care to stumble over Johnnie's feet at every other step he took. At last, as if he were quite tired, he exclaimed, "Nay, dal it, Johnnie, aw'st ha'e t' gie out, if thou doesn't keep them feet o' thine to thysel'. They're a' o'er th' place; aw cannot step ony rooad bout treeadin' on 'em."

"Thee let my feet a-be, wilto," shouted Johnnie, amid the laughter of the others, exasperated by this wanton allusion to his physical monstrosities. "If thou'rt sich a greyt clunterin' jolteryead 'at thou cannot 'elp fa'-in' o'er my feet, thou'd best cower thyself down on thy pick-point, and' leeav them t' seech, as knows what they're doin' on."

"Aw'd a deecal sooner fa' o'er thy feet, Johnnie, nor ha'e thy feet fa' o'er me," exclaimed Muckie Dynault's dowter's lad, with much sincerity.

A great laugh followed this retort, which did not soothe the old man's ruffled plumage. But before he could make any rejoinder Owd Hundert took him gravely to task for his ill-temper. "Nay, nay, Johnnie, owd cony-catcher, thou shouldno' flite them, as is nobbut 'elpin' thee a bit: it's noan reet, an' aw winnot ston' it fur one. So put that i' thy pipe and smook it."

Another laugh followed Owd Hundert's reproof, which had been uttered with a highly piquant mock gravity. Before Johnnie had time to say a word for himself, Young Hundert piped out, "What's th' use o' fa'in' out, chaps, when Johnnie con find his wattch fur hissel'. Dunnot yo' know as 'e's gett'n a glass t' look thruff t' see what's out o' seet. Thou should look thruff thy glass, Johnnie, thou should look thruff thy glass."

Johnnie's rage rose at this open slight upon his magical powers, but he was slow of speech, and while he was arranging his ideas for a crushing retort, Bill o' Jack's o' Baconswooard, chimed in, "Ay, by gow, Owd Hundert, dostno' mind gooin' t' Johnnie fur t' sper after they loist Dick, an' 'e said as 'e could see th' passon gooin' into th' dur o' Billinge Church, an' that's four mile off, if it's a inch?"

"Ay, by th' owd lad, Baconswooard," replied Owd Hundert, "aw mind it weel; Johnnie mit ha'e seen, what 'e

said 'at 'e seed ; but 'e couldno' see our Dick, glass or no glass."

Johnnie could not deny this home-thrust ; but that did not mend his temper. More than once he lifted his pick, as if he meant to strike one or other of his tormentors. But he let it fall to his side with the plaintive words, " Five t' one, five t' one ; best let 'em a-be."

Suddenly Sam Cinderworrier clapped his ear to the potato pie, and shouted, " By gum, Johnnie, thy dinner's wick. Just 'airken to't. Aw con ye'r it tickin' gradely. Aw knowed yo'r Tuffee Ann put rare mak o' stuff into 'er tuffee, bur aw niver knowed 'at oo baked pies o' wick meeat afore."

All the men put their ears to Johnnie's handkerchief, and they made as if they were thoroughly frightened, when Young Hundert cried, " By gow, Johnnie, owd bantam, thy pie's gett'n th' tick ; thou'll ha'e to draw a tooth t' mak it a reet."

Johnnie could stand the plaguing no longer, and, leaning over the shoulders of the grinning group, he snatched the handkerchief containing the pie from Sam's grimy hand, and aimed a doughty blow at Owd Hundert. He missed his aim ; the handkerchief untied itself ; out flew the basin ; the lid of the pie leaped off without breaking, to the immortal honour of the consistency of Tuffee Ann's pastry, and the watch went flying against the roof of the gallery. The basin was smashed into a hundred pieces, the contents of the pie were scattered in juicy fragments all over the floor, and the watch stopped quite suddenly at half-past twelve, though by a miracle the glass did not break.

" By gow, Johnnie," exclaimed Owd Hundert ; " thou's shapt that gradely ; thou meant it fur my yead, an' thou's missed thy chance this time, owd lad. Thou shouldno' let

angry passions rise ; thou's wasted thy victual, an' thou's gett'n a new soart o' watch an' a', as strikes o' itsel'."

The rest of the men laughed heartily at the old man's discomfiture ; he was ready to cry from vexation, so, like good-natured miners, they passed the hat round for repairs. They busied themselves with their work in silence, broken only by the dull thud of the pick, the falling of the coal, and periodic bursts of half-smothered laughter. When they got to the pit-brow in the afternoon, the story was too good to keep to themselves, and by nightfall everyone in the village knew of the trick, and rejoiced thereat. That was not the worst of the matter, as far as Johnnie was concerned. For weeks afterwards the urchins of Rose Hill kept coming into the little shop one at a time, and thus protracting the agony. Every time they entered the door they shouted pleasantly, "Whooa stole thy wattch, Johnnie? Look thruff thy glass fur't, look thruff thy glass."

The old man's reputation as a fortune teller in Barnton was lost after this unfortunate episode in his career, to the saving of the pockets of the villagers. But the number of his clients was not thereby greatly diminished. The neighbouring villages, where only his fame for wisdom remained, supplied him with many curious wiseacres, who wanted to know what they had no business to know, and if they did not get much enlightenment, that was neither their fault nor Johnnie's, he at least told them all that he knew, and they believed him.

Big Johnnie is only one example of a number of seers of various kinds, who have survived to the very skirts of the twentieth century. Wherever there are people who are desirous of knowing the future before it comes to pass, there will continue to be men who will volunteer to give the requisite information. The information may content them ; but, like the ancient oracles, it is apt to be so vague, that

it may possibly come to pass. By such flimsy deceptions are the curious contented, and the pockets of more or less undeserving sages lined with silver. The old fortune teller, whose character has been sketched, lived to a round age, and he passed away with the reputation of a man affecting wisdom in the affairs of others, but supremely silly in the conduct of his own. Though he made much money for a working man, little of it stuck to his fingers; and all that remains of him is the memory of a simple philosopher, who cheated others, but who in his own village was

The sport of boys and rabble-wit.

SONNET.

(In imitation of A. W., an anonymous Elizabethan poet.)

“My thoughts are heavy burdens to my Heart.”
 No sea of Tears can overflow Regret;
 Mine eyes for ever watch the dawn and set
 Of hopeless days, wherein I Live no part.
 O lovely Soul! return and soothe my smart;
 Kiss from my anguished brow the Grief which stings;
 Fold round my breast the healing of thy wings,
 And Shrine me in the lambent Love Thou art.
 Like as a child affrighted of the gloom,
 I strive to pierce the awful Infinite,
 And stretch vague hands to Thee across the Tomb
 In trust my Pain is naked to thy sight—
 Oh! leave me not alone with death and doom,
 Wing swiftly hence my Soul into the Light.

W. R. CREDLAND.



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DANTE.

BY C. E. TYRER.

Wer den Dichter will verstehn,
Muss im Dichters Lande gehn.

—Goethe.

NOT long ago, as I was talking about Dante to one of our best literary critics, he expressed the, to me, very singular opinion that the great Italian poet could be on the whole more satisfactorily studied in England than in Italy. Italy, he appeared to think, was apt to exercise a disturbing influence on one's purely objective appreciation of the poet and his poem. I ventured then to differ from my friend, and still more should I now differ, holding that of no poet perhaps more than of Dante are true those words of Goethe which I have put at the head of this paper; viz., that he who would understand a poet must travel in the poet's land. To those who have visited the Isles of Greece and the shores of the Ægean the verses of Homer must surely have a freshness and fullness of meaning unknown to those who have only seen in imagination "the pure lines of an Ionian horizon, the liquid clearness of an Ionian sky." The grey table-lands of La Mancha still yield, I doubt not, a thousand illustrations of the adventures of Cervantes' immortal Knight and Squire. Browning, who called Italy his university and to

whom it became a second fatherland, must in many of his finest poems yield but a very scanty meaning to those who know nothing of "the land of lands." Who, again, can feel in any full measure the magic of Wordsworth's verse, who has never seen that lovely lake-land from which he drank inspiration, and in the midst of which he is laid to rest? And though the genius of Shakspeare was, one may say, such an impersonal genius, a genius less dependent, so far as one can see, on local conditions and personal circumstances than almost any other, yet there is something in the purely English landscape of Stratford and the soft flow of his own Avon, which accords, better than anything else could do, with the genuine English character of a genius which was destined to become, not only England's but the world's. I am not sure, however, that Goethe's verses are not truer of Dante than they could well be of any other poet. Dante—in this sense the antithesis of Shakspeare—was before everything a personal poet; and he built up his great poem out of his own personality and his own experiences, out of the joys and sorrows and aspirations of his own nature and his own soul, and out of the manifold features of that strange complicated medieval life which surrounded him, which, in the "Divine Comedy" he may be said to have summed up for all time, and of which he remains, in a striking way, the central figure. And he stands forth not only as a type of that age, but of the Italian nature in all ages—a typical contradictory personality in a land of contradictions, where the fierce and the cruel, the coarse and the sensual, the hideous and the foul, have ever lived side by side with the tenderest aspirations and affections, with the purest and noblest spirituality, with all that is lovely and appealing in nature and art. Even now the Italians have changed less from what they were in Dante's

time than would usually be supposed, and beneath their modern garments conceal much that is rather medieval than modern : violent and unreasoning passions with the most exquisite antique courtesy ; side by side with great liberality and generosity of nature, much of that narrow local patriotism and intense party rancour which wrought such havoc in the little medieval cities and states which Dante knew. I might speak also of the thousand aids to the study of the poet which Italy affords and which are to be found nowhere else—of the vast array of precious MSS., of the possibility of intercourse with hundreds of Dante-Scholars and Dante-Students who speak the pure Italian idiom which Dante was the first to establish, of the advantages which a familiar acquaintance with the language and its constant use give in the elucidation of those numerous passages in the “ Divine Comedy ” which are veritable pitfalls for the unwary, and where even the wary must keep a remarkably watchful eye if they would preserve the right path. How much too, do the external aspects of nature in Italy—and of this I shall have something to say later—afford in the way of illustration of a poet who made such ample use of that nature in his writings, who knew it so intimately, and who loved it so tenderly !

In one of the streets of old Florence—that portion of old Florence which modern vandalism has so far respected—there is a house which, often as I have passed it by, I never pass without some emotion, for on the stone lintel of the door are engraved these words : *In questa casa degli Alighieri nacque il divino Poeta.* (In this house of the Alighieri the divine poet was born.) It is a very modest little house, more modest even than that one in Stratford-on-Avon, where, three hundred years after Dante’s birth, the son of John Shakspeare first saw the light of day,

and mounting a stone staircase you find a room on the first floor, containing busts, pictures, a small library and other memorials (including an Italian letter of Gladstone to Professor Giuliani), while opening out of this is another room, dark and now quite bare, which tradition assigns as the birth-chamber. On the other side of the narrow street is an ancient tower, with a little square adjoining, where were the houses of the Portinari. Behind is another small piazza, still called Piazza dei Donati—names which survive, and will ever survive, in connection with the life of the greatest of Italians and the Florence of his day. Since that May morning of the year of grace 1265, when the baby-boy of Alighiero di Bellincione degli Alighieri was borne through the streets of the little medieval city to the baptismal font, in his "bel San Giovanni," where he received the name of Durante, afterwards, in Italian fashion, contracted to Dante,* to that September night of 1321 when he breathed his last in exile at Ravenna, what sights did he look upon, what emotions of soul, sweet and sad and terrible, did he experience, how many roads felt the impress of his feet! Firm was his step, proud and erect his gait, as in the days of his youth and early manhood, handsome, accomplished, a lover, a soldier, and a poet, he walked the streets of his native Florence. Far otherwise when, weary, wayworn, and prematurely old, it having been "the pleasure," as he says in the "Convivio" I. 3, "of the citizens of the most beautiful and famous daughter of Rome [Florence] to cast me forth from her most sweet bosom," he mounted the "steep stairs" and tasted the "bitter bread" of exile. We cannot trace those footsteps

* It is singular to think that the greatest of Italian poets should be universally known by a contracted form of his baptismal name. It is as if Shakspeare were always spoken of as "Will."

of Dante in more than a very imperfect way. In regard to the long years of exile, all that modern scholarship and modern research have been able to do is to construct what one may call a tentative itinerary of his travels. We know (partly from his own words, partly from independent testimony) that he attached himself for some time to the Florentine *fuorusciti*, who, in union with their Ghibelline sympathisers, made various expeditions against Florence, and can trace him at several points in those first years of exile. That he was at least twice in Verona, his *primo rifugio e primo ostello*, at the Court of the Scalas; that he visited Padua in 1306; that he was afterwards a guest of one of the Malaspini in the Lunigiana; that he thence probably passed into France, and studied in the University of Paris; that he was again in Italy at the time of the descent of the Emperor Henry VII., to whom he personally paid homage in Milan*; that he was for some time with one of the Conti Guidi in the Casentino,† whence he addressed two of his extant epistles; that he visited Lucca, perhaps as the guest of the great Ghibelline chief, Uguccione della Faggiuola; and that the closing years of his life were passed apparently in comparative peace and happiness at Ravenna, under the hospitable roof of Guido Novello da Polenta. However, with the hundreds of scholars who are busy in Italy and elsewhere, studying and commenting Dante's works, investigating the facts of his life, ransacking archives, and inquiring into every possible source whence light may be thrown even on the apparently most insignificant details, it is probable that in the course of time we shall know more. How did Dante travel? and what sort of roads

* Epist. VII. 2. † v. Wicksteed and Gardner, "Dante and Del Virgilio," Prolegomena, p. 60. I should like to recommend to all serious Dante students this most valuable and important book, just issued from the press.

did he travel along? The main roads of Italy are now excellent; but it must be remembered that not a single one of these, or anything similar,* existed in Dante's day, nor until centuries later. Anyone who has walked from Alassio in the Genoese Riviera by the old road, along the brow of the hills to the ancient little town of Albenga, will probably have a very fair idea of what, in Dante's day, even the main and most frequented highways of Italy were like; and will understand in particular the reference, evidently based upon personal experience, which he makes in *Purg.* iii. 49-51, to the terrible state of the roads along the entire Riviera, "tra Lerici e Turbia" roads which he had probably traversed himself during his journey into France. How different the Riviera now, with its two modern highways—the railway and the excellent carriage-road—and not less with its gay winter resorts and luxurious hotels! And what were Italian inns like in those days, and was Dante often compelled to put up at one? No student of the "Divine Comedy" and of Dante's other Italian works can have failed to observe how frequently the words *peregrino* (pilgrim) and *albergo* (inn) occur in them. Indeed, some of the most beautiful and striking passages in the poet's writings occur in connection with those very words. Sometimes, as we have seen, Dante took up his abode with powerful friends and patrons. Often, we may well suppose, he was a guest in some of the various monasteries then scattered over the whole of Italy, finding in their libraries, in all probability, such books as he needed to consult. But, often, too, one fancies that he must have passed the night at an inn, and pretty rough, we may be sure, even in the

*An exception must be made in favour of the Highways which the Romans had made; but in what condition these were at that epoch I am unable to say.

chief towns, were the Italian inns of that day. What would one not give to be able to go back for the nonce through all those centuries, and find oneself supping at the same table with Dante Alighieri! And as for the cities, most of them contain comparatively few buildings which existed in Dante's time. It has been said of Florence that if one of its citizens of a hundred years ago could now open his eyes in the city of his birth, he would hardly recognise it under its modern guise. How would it fare with a Florentine of the thirteenth century! One building remains, it is true, the Baptistry, Dante's "beautiful Saint John," where, as I have said, he was baptized, and where, an exile, he still hoped one day to receive the laureate crown as a great Christian poet,* while the Cathedral adjoining "St. Mary of the Flower,"† and the Palazzo Vecchio in the Piazza della Signoria, had both been begun before Dante left Florence, never to return. Externally then Italy has changed much since the great poet traversed its roads and abode in its cities, and we cannot, in any literal sense, follow his footsteps. But one thing at least is unchanged—external nature. The Italy of that day was probably, it is true, a much more richly forested and better watered country, and I should hope also (considering the numerous images Dante derives from bird-life, though in face of *Purg.* XXIII. 3, without anything approaching to certainty), that the hideous practice of massacring all the little song-birds for food had not reached at anyrate anything like its modern proportions. But the general features of the landscape were the same; the bright green of the vine

* *Parad.* XXV., 8-9. † So called from the Lily (*Iris florentina*) the Arms of the Commune. Embedded in the wall of one of the houses, on the south side of the Cathedral Square, may still be seen a flat, square stone, called *il sasso di Dante*, where it is said that the poet used to sit watching the progress of the work.

and the silver grey of the olive, clothed as now, the wide champaign and the undulations of the hills; monasteries, and fortified villages, and cities rose against the sky from the loftier heights, the Appennines, were then, as now, robed at noon and eve in purple and amethyst, the vault of heaven had the same loftiness and spaciousness and the same lucent horizons, there was the same pageantry of sunrise and sunset and the same burnished moon and keen stars of night. And Dante was a keen lover of all these things; every aspect of nature animate, and inanimate, had for him its particular charm, and once, by the medium of those piercing eyes, impressed on the tablets of his memory, remained there, never to be effaced. Every student of the "Divine Comedy" knows what a splendid use he has made of these natural images, how rich the divine poem is in simile and metaphor drawn from the most varied aspects of the nature which surrounded him. And it is just here, I think, that—as we behold the same sights which he beheld—we seem to be following most closely in his footsteps, while, at the same time, we acquire a vivid realization of hundreds of passages which we can attain in no other way. I will mention a few, a very few, of such passages. Who that at nightfall, in a Tuscan vineyard or cornfield, has seen the fire-flies in their myriads light their little lamps in the gathering dusk, and flit hither and thither like tiny embodiments of fire, will not be able to realize, in a manner otherwise impossible, that passage in the "Inferno," where the spirits of the evil counsellors in the 8th Circle of Malebolge, enswathed in flame, are likened for their multitude to the fire-flies which "the peasant, who sleeps on the hillside, sees in the valley beneath him." And that famous passage in the opening of the 8th Canto of the "Purgatorio" (a passage of which the first six lines of a stanza in

Byron's "Don Juan" are an almost literal translation, and which very possibly inspired the first verse of Gray's "Elegy"), must needs acquire a new meaning to those who know well the sound of the *Ave Maria di notte*, as from the church-bells of the city it is borne through the still evening air to one without the walls, just at that most enthralling moment when twilight is melting into night, seeming indeed literally to "mourn for the day that is dying."* Those too, who know, or rather did know, the Pineta of Ravenna (for it has, I understand, been almost entirely destroyed by fires), and perhaps rambled beneath its soft canopies of shade with the poem of Dante in their hands and its verses in their hearts, must have found an incomparable charm in "those exquisite terzine that fall so restfully upon the ear and upon the heart," and were perhaps composed amid these very scenes, in which Dante speaks of the *divina foresta spessa e viva*, which greeted his eyes when the purgatorial heights were left behind, and the earthly Paradise lay before him. These meagre examples must suffice to indicate what a rich field of illustrations of the divine poem is supplied by "the poet's land."

In the gallery of a French provincial town, whose name I cannot recall, I remember seeing some years ago a picture which impressed me greatly, though I am not sure that its technical merits would be considered at all remarkable. It was called "Dante en exil" and represented the poet in a coarse brown dress, with a stout staff and a small bundle in his hand, resting on the stone benches surrounding the basement of an Italian palace, such as may be seen to-day

* This line, Purg. VIII. 6., has been spoiled by Byron in his rendering of the passage through the use of the word "decay"—"the dying day's decay," no doubt from the necessities of the rhyme.

in various palaces at Florence and elsewhere. Weariness and dejection are in his face and attitude. Only his keen eyes are alive, for at that moment a gay company of cavaliers and ladies, in quest of their pleasures, are passing along the street. They see him not, or, if they see indeed the pale-visaged travel-stained wanderer in his coarse home-spun, pay not the least heed to him. But he has seen them, and like the Ancient Mariner, fixed them with his glittering eye, and will not forget them. Perhaps they will go down to posterity, with their meed of infamy or praise, in the pages of the immortal poem gaining such future renown as will be theirs from the verses of the despised foot-traveller, "almost a beggar," whom they thought entirely beneath their notice. Thus does "the whirligig of time bring round its revenges." Now there is not a building in Italy, which, if one could be quite sure that Dante even stayed for a night within it or even rested for a few moments on the step or the bench outside, would not forthwith receive an inscription in bronze or stone recalling to the minds of men the distinguished honour of that event, and handing it down to posterity. And scholars and students have long been endeavouring, and still continue to endeavour, to trace, as far as may be possible, the footsteps of Dante, and find their greatest pleasure and consolation in following, both in the literal and spiritual senses: "Dictro alle poste delle care piaute," after the prints of the beloved feet.





MAETERLINCK ON BEES.

BY WALTER BUTTERWORTH.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK has, during the last decade, excited a lively curiosity among readers of many kinds. Unconventional in his methods and aims, he has often puzzled, not seldom exasperated, his critics. With the usual anxiety to label an author and have done with him, they have dubbed him pessimist, decadent, symbolist, mystic, transcendentalist, and even madman.

The criticism which merely calls names is not convincing. The names may not be wholly beside the mark, they may clumsily and rather brutally describe certain characteristics, woefully out of perspective, and admirably adapted to mislead the general reader. But no man can justly be dismissed with an epithet. To attempt it with a thinker and artist of Maeterlinck's varied gifts is deplorably uncritical.

This is not a suitable time to try to analyse fully the qualities in Maeterlinck's work which have brought to him misunderstanding and mistrust, even while they have earned him the admiration and love of many. His writings are largely tentative. Each opens out problems of art,

of life, of speculation. But a consideration of his last work, "*La vie de Abeilles*," may make clear his leading thoughts and aims. It is simple in its scope, setting out to describe a year's life in the hive of the ordinary honey-bee.

Never before have the phenomena of the "waxen city" been described with such glowing enthusiasm, such suggestiveness, such brilliant power of presentment. We should have to go back as far as Virgil, in his fourth *Georgic*, to find equal literary charm, and even then the two men are to be contrasted, not compared.

Maeterlinck, it is true, disclaims any attempt at fine writing. He desires to tell accurately what he has himself seen, in studying bees during the last twenty years. He does not want to "decorate the truth." "There is more joy," he says, "in saying true things than in saying striking things." "I have ceased to look for anything more beautiful in this world, or more interesting, than the truth; or, at least, than the effort one is able to make towards the truth."

But there are many ways of telling the truth; otherwise literature would be a veritable Sahara. No fear of him, to use Lord Rosebery's recent phrase, "burning a candle at the pale shrine of platitude." The truths he has to tell are often stranger than fiction, and in the narration of them there glows the rapture of the poet. One or two examples of his imaginative descriptions will speak best for themselves.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HIVE.

Our hive, then, is beginning to swarm; making ready for the great immolation to the exacting gods of the race. In obedience to the order of the spirit—an order that to us may well seem incomprehensible, for it is entirely opposed to all our instincts and feelings—60,000 or 70,000 bees out of the 80,000 or 90,000 that form the whole population, will abandon the maternal city at the prescribed hour. They

will not leave at a moment of despair, or desert, with sudden and wild resolve, a home laid waste by famine, disease or war. No; the exile has long been planned, and the favourable hour patiently awaited. Were the hive poor, had it suffered from pillage or storm, had misfortune befallen the royal family, the bees would not forsake it. They leave it only when it has attained the apogee of its prosperity, at a time when, after the arduous labours of the spring, the immense palace of wax has its 120,000 well-arranged cells overflowing with new honey, and with the many coloured flour known as "bees' bread," on which nymphs and larvæ are fed.

Never is the hive more beautiful than on the eve of its heroic renouncement, in its unrivalled hour of fullest abundance and joy, serene, for all its apparent excitement and feverishness. Let us endeavour to picture it to ourselves—not as it appears to the bees, for we cannot tell in what magical, formidable fashion things may be reflected in the 6,000 or 7,000 facets of their lateral eyes and the triple cyclopean eye on their brow—but as it would seem to us, were we of their stature.

From the height of a dome more colossal than that of St. Peter's, at Rome, waxen walls descend to the ground, balanced in the void and the darkness; gigantic and manifold, vertical and parallel geometric constructions, to which, for relative precision, audacity and vastness, no human structure is comparable. Each of these walls, whose substance still is immaculate and fragrant, of virginal, silvery freshness, contains thousands of cells stored with provisions sufficient to feed the whole people for several weeks. Here, lodged in transparent cells, are the pollens, love-ferment of every flower of spring, making brilliant splashes of red and yellow, of black and mauve. Close by, sealed with a seal to be broken only in days of supreme distress, the honey of April is stored, most limpid and perfumed of all, in 20,000 reservoirs that form a long and magnificent embroidery of gold, whose borders hang stiff and rigid. Still lower the honey of May matures, in great open vats, by whose side watchful cohorts maintain an incessant current of air. In the centre and far from the light, whose diamond rays steal in through the only opening, in the warmest part of the hive, there stands the abode of the future, here does it sleep and wake. For this is the royal domain of the brood-cells, set apart for the queen and her acolytes; about 10,000 cells wherein the eggs repose, 15,000 or 16,000 chambers tenanted by larvæ, 40,000 dwellings inhabited by white nymphs, to whom thousands of nurses minister. And, finally, in the holy of holies of these parts, are the three, four, six or twelve sealed palaces, vast

in size, compared with the others, where the adolescent princesses lie who await their hour; wrapped in a kind of shroud, all of them motionless and pale, and fed in the darkness.

We obtain many hints from this book alone why Maeterlinck has been regarded as a mystic, a transcendentalist. The doings of the bees constantly set him brooding upon the mysteries and problems of life.

Why, for instance, do these little creatures exhibit so much self-abnegation when swarming? Whence comes their foresight, their social instinct, their adaptability to fresh conditions, their care and labour for the commonweal? How came they to be architects, geometers, chemists, engineers? What are the relations of spirit and matter, the distinctions between instinct and intelligence?

To him all created things are an enigma. He is saturated with the sense of mystery in the universe. As Mr. Symons says: "He has realised how unsearchable is the darkness out of which we have but just stepped, and the darkness into which we are about to pass." Maeterlinck himself remarks: "There is not an hour without its familiar miracles and its ineffable suggestions." For him the keenest enjoyment of life is to study "the mysteries and eternal order and the occult force of things." To probe into that which lies beyond thought. To address the mind to the bonds between the visible and the invisible; the temporal and the eternal. "To endeavour to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul, of whatever exists and can be realised by the consciousness." This is an unintelligible world, in which "we grope among shadows towards the unknown." We are such stuff as dreams are made of. This kind of brooding and questioning is generally disturbing to one's serenity, sometimes perilous. 'Tis a diet too austere for human nature's

daily food. A certain sadness haunts Maeterlinck's pages, the sadness we have all occasionally felt, when the vastness of nature is borne in upon us, and our own insignificance becomes understood.

SADNESS LATENT IN NATURE.

Here, then, as everywhere else in the world, one part of the circle is folded in darkness; here, as everywhere, it is from without, from an unknown power, that the supreme order issues; and the bees, like ourselves, obey the nameless lord of the wheel that incessantly turns on itself and crushes the wills that have set it in motion.

Some little time back I conducted a friend to one of my hives of glass, and showed him the movements of this wheel, that was as readily perceptible as the great wheel of a clock—showed him, in all its bareness, the universal agitation on every comb, the perpetual, frantic, bewildered haste of the nurses around the brood-cells; the living gangways and ladders formed by the makers of wax; the abounding, unceasing activity of the entire population, and their pitiless, useless effort; the ardent, feverish coming and going of all; the general absence of sleep save in the cradles alone, around which continuous labour kept watch; the denial of even the repose of death in a home which permits no illness, and accords no grave; and my friend, his astonishment over, soon turned his eyes away, and in them I could read the signs of I know not what saddened fear.

And truly, underlying the gladness that we note first of all in the hive; underlying the dazzling memories of beautiful days that render it the store-house of summer's most precious jewels; underlying the blissful journeys that knit it so close to the flowers and to running water, to the sky, to the peaceful abundance of all that makes for beauty and happiness—underlying all these exterior joys there reposes a sadness as deep as the eye of man can behold. And we, who dimly gaze on these things with our own blind eyes, we know full well that it is not they alone whom we are striving to see, not they alone whom we cannot understand, but that before us there lies a pitiable form of the great power that quickens us also.

Sad let it be, as all things 'n nature are sad, when our eyes rest too closely upon them. And thus it ever shall be so long as we know not her secret, or even whether secret truly there be. And should we discover some day that there is no secret, or that the secret is monstrous, other duties will then arise that, as yet, perhaps,

have no name. Let our heart, if it will, in the meanwhile repeat, "It is sad," but let our reason be content to add, "Thus it is." At the present hour, the duty before us is to seek out that which perhaps may be hiding behind these sorrows; and, urged on by this endeavour, we must not turn our eyes away, but must steadily, fixedly watch these sorrows, and study them with a courage and interest as keen as though they were joys. It is right that before we judge Nature, before we complain, we should at least ask every question that we can possibly ask.

Despite this latent melancholy, one thing is clear to Maeterlinck. He will, like Walt Whitman, sing "hymns of the praise of things." To him, as to Whitman, "a hair on the back of his hand is just as curious as any special revelation." Everything is strange, unaccountable, beautiful; from a bug to the moon, from the sight of the eyes to the appetite for food. So Maeterlinck concludes by feeling "a deep admiration," which, of all things in the world, is the most helpful to us.

INTELLIGENCE OF BEES.

But what have we to do, some will ask, with the intelligence of the bees? What concern is it of ours, whether this be a little less or a little more? Why weigh, with such infinite care, a minute fragment of almost invisible matter, as though it were a fluid whereon depended the destiny of man? I hold, and exaggerate nothing, that our interest herein is most considerable. The discovery of a sign of true intellect outside ourselves procures us something of the emotion Robinson Crusoe felt when he saw the imprint of a human foot on the sandy beach of his island. We seem less solitary than we had believed. And, indeed, in our endeavours to understand the intellect of the bees, we are studying in them that which is most precious in our own substance: an atom of the extraordinary matter which possesses, wherever it attach itself, the magnificent power of transfiguring blind necessity, of organising, embellishing and multiplying life; and most striking of all, of holding in suspense the obstinate force of death and the mighty, irresponsible wave that wraps almost all that exists in an eternal unconsciousness.

Were we sole possessors of the particle of matter that, when maintained in a special condition of flower or incandescence, we term the intellect, we should be to some extent entitled to look on our-

selves as privileged beings and to imagine that in us Nature achieved some kind of aim; but here we discover, in the hymenoptera, an entire category of beings in whom a more or less identical aim is achieved. And this fact, though it decide nothing perhaps, still holds an honourable place in the mass of tiny facts that help to throw light on our position in this world. It affords even, if considered from a certain point of view, a fresh proof of the most enigmatic part of our being; for the superpositions of destinies that we find in the hive are surveyed by us from an eminence loftier than we can attain for the contemplation of the destinies of man. We see before us, in miniature, the large and simple lives, that in our own disproportionate sphere we never have the occasion to disentangle and follow to the end. Spirit and matter are there, the race and the individual, evolution and permanence; life and death, the past and the future; all gathered together in a retreat that our hand can lift, and one look of our eye embrace. And may we not reasonably ask ourselves whether the mere size of a body and the room that it fills in time and space, can modify to the extent we imagine the secret idea of Nature; the idea that we try to discover in the little history of the hive, which in a few days already is ancient, no less than in the great history of man, of whom three generations overlap a long century?

It is clear from Maeterlinck's works that he has a rare delicacy of mind, a passion for studying nature's secrets, and a most earnest love of the beautiful. He is first and last a poet. In those enthralling fantasies which he has written for the stage he

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Some of his scenes are indeed "of imagination all compact," like Keats' dream of

Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

At such times he is truly the visionary poet, evoking scenes wherein all is touched with a magical beauty. In his methods, too, he attempts to escape from conventions. He and a few kindred spirits became known as symbolists, chiefly through (to use the words of a friendly critic) "an attempt to spiritualise literature, to evade the old bondage of rhetoric, the old bondage of exteriority."

Thus in method and matter alike he has had a tendency to "bewilder the middle classes," and to be reckoned among what may be conveniently called the "disturbing" spirits of our time. The average man does not want to be disturbed; he feels uneasy at such vagaries; he likes to have his feet on solid earth, pacing well-trodden ways. He dislikes "the fantastic, the uncanny, the far-fetched." Commend him to the dictates of "common-sense."

But the poet's realm is not to be measured by the rule of common-sense alone. He rescues us from the petty details of the daily round, by showing how we are all enchained in the great scheme of the universe. How beauty and mystery environ us. "Mere common-sense," exclaims Maeterlinck, "which is often so harmful, the common-sense that replied to Galileo: 'The earth does not turn, for I can see the sun move in the sky, rise in the morning and sink in the evening, and nothing can prevail over the testimony of my eyes.' Common-sense makes an admirable and necessary background for the mind; but unless it be watched by a lofty disquiet, ever ready to remind it, when occasion demand, of the infinity of its ignorance, it dwindles into the mere routine of the baser side of our intellect."

However, "*La Vie des Abeilles*," is full of common-sense. It is careful and accurate, though a strict scientist might consider it fanciful and might chafe at Maeterlinck's turn for metaphysics.

A remarkable quality of the book is its high seriousness; every enquiry into the life, the polity, the habits, the evolution of bees is charged with enthusiasm, with a sincere and ardent desire to get at the truth of the matter.

A final quotation will serve to illustrate its rich and fascinating style.

THE NUPTIAL FLIGHT.

Very few, I imagine, have profaned the secret of the queen-bee's wedding, which comes to pass in the infinite, radiant circles of a beautiful sky. But we are able to witness the hesitating departure of the bride-elect, and the murderous return of the bride.

However great her impatience, she will yet choose her day and her hour, and linger in the shadow of the portal till a marvellous morning flings open wide the nuptial spaces in the depths of the great azure vault. She loves the moment when drops of dew still moisten the leaves and the flowers, when the last fragrance of dying dawn still wrestles with burning day, like a maiden caught in the arms of a heavy warrior; when, through the silence of approaching noon is heard once and again, a transparent cry that has lingered from sunrise.

Then she appears on the threshold—in the midst of indifferent foragers, if she have left sisters in the hive; or surrounded by a delirious throng of workers, should it be impossible to fill her place. She starts her flight backwards, returns twice or thrice to the alighting-board, and then, having definitely fixed in her mind the exact situation and aspect of the kingdom she has never yet seen from without, she departs like an arrow to the zenith of the blue. She soars to a height, a luminous zone, that other bees attain at no period of their life. Far away, caressing their idleness in the midst of the flowers, the males have beheld the apparition, have breathed the magnetic perfume that spreads from group to group, till every apiary near is instinct with it. Immediately crowds collect and follow her into the sea of gladness, whose limpid boundaries ever recede. She, drunk with her wings, obeying the magnificent law of the race that chooses her lover, and enacts that the strongest alone shall attain her in the solitude of the ether, she rises still, and, for the first time in her life, the blue morning air rushes into her stigmata, singing its song, like the blood of heaven, in the myriad tubes of the tracheal sacs, nourished on space, that fill the centre of her body. She rises

still. A region must be found unhaunted by birds, that else might profane the mystery. She rises still; and already the ill-assorted troop below are dwindling and falling asunder. The feeble, infirm, the aged, unwelcome, ill-fed, who have flown from inactive or impoverished cities—these renounce the pursuit and disappear in the void. Only a small, indefatigable cluster remain, suspended in infinite opal. She summons her wings for one final effort; and now the chosen of incomprehensible forces has reached her, has seized her, and, bounding aloft with united impetus, the ascending spiral of their intertwined flight whirls for one second in the hostile madness of love.

No sooner has the union been accomplished than the male's abdomen opens, the organ detaches itself, dragging with it the mass of the entrails, the wings relax, and, as though struck by lightning, the emptied body turns and turns on itself and sinks into the abyss. One embrace suffices; the rest all enacts itself in the very flanks of the bride. She descends from the azure heights and returns to the hive, trailing behind her, like an oriflamme, the unfolded entrails of her lover.

Maeterlinck has I think given to his readers a book different in some respects from any previous work upon nature-subjects. The scientist, philosopher and the poet approach the study of natural phenomena from different standpoints. In Maeterlinck the three are largely combined and their methods blended. The average scientist is precise, practical, dispassionate, concerned wholly with facts. In an old-fashioned observer like Gilbert White the scientific spirit is warmed and humanized by an affection for the things observed; as he examines and compares, he loves. The living creatures are almost his children. In more modern writers, like Mr. Burroughs, or "The Son of the Marshes," something remains of Gilbert White's fond handling. But they are oftener caught up in that enthusiasm for nature, for the beauty which enwraps us round, and their books have an æsthetic flavour; they abound in literary allusion and are distinguished by a careful style.

Richard Jefferies, the English writer, par excellence, whose observations of nature were transmuted into poetry, though in the form of prose, comes nearest to Maeterlinck in his susceptibility, his passion for the study of life in all its phases, his enthusiasm, his close and fine perception, his command of imaginative description.

Both have lived, as it were, in an enchanted land, seeing farther, deeper, clearer, than their fellows. Both touch the note of sadness. One gift was denied to Jefferies, with which Maeterlinck is richly dowered, poetic form of singular delicacy, subtlety and grace. But in "*La Vie des Abeilles*," Maeterlinck has left this aside and occupied common ground with Jefferies. There are essential differences between the two, not now to be considered, but both men knock reverently at the door of nature, and reverently seek to learn of her secrets.





THE "FORGET-ME-NOT."

BY CHAS. T. TALLENT-BATEMAN.

THE history of the "Forget-me-Not" Annual has never been written. May I be her historian and commentator? My subject is not a section of "high literature." It is but a chapter—though a most interesting chapter—in British Bibliography : with an appendix on Art : dealing, in particular, with a style of art which England once made peculiarly her own. The "Annual" of which I propose to treat was ostensibly a book ; but it succeeded, and became popular—like every member of its class—because it was in great part a picture gallery.

The "Forget-Me-Not, a Christmas, New Year's and birthday present," was, throughout its entire course of twenty-six years, edited by one man, Mr. Frederic Shoberl, a native of Britain, but of foreign extraction, a man of fine literary and artistic taste, and a poet rather less than minor. He was almost "poeta non minor sed minimus." The motto adopted for this Annual consisted of the following lines of "L.E.L." (Letitia E. Landon)—

"Appealing, by the magic of its name,
To gentle feelings and affections ; kept
Within the heart like gold."

With reference to this motto, it is curious that it should not contain the name of the book ; but should lay stress on other words : while the next following Annual, "The Friendship's Offering," should have for its motto the lines—

This is Affection's Tribute, Friendship's Offering
Whose silent eloquence, more rich than words,
Tells of the Giver's faith, and truth in absence,
And says—"Forget-Me-Not."

The publisher was Mr. Rudolph Ackermann, the famous London art publisher, who, next to Mr. Boydell, in the preceding century, did more than any other English publisher to encourage, foster and promote, in the British Isles, the fine arts of painting and engraving. Aquatint, stipple, line engraving and lithography all received almost the earliest and almost the greatest impetus in our country from the substantial patronage of this man of taste and enterprise.

The "Forget-Me-Not" Annual may be considered as a personification, under six aspects, or in six capacities, or characters, viz. : — 1. As a successor and imitator. 2. As a founder, and model. 3. As a survivor of her offspring. 4. As a specialist and originator. 5. As a benefactor ; and 6. As a humourist.

Under five of the above aspects I will show :—

1. How this Annual was a successor and imitator of a series of Continental almanacks :

2. How it was the founder and model of a numerous race, or family, of English Annuals—some superior, others (and most of them) inferior —and some of them remarkably shortlived ; others attaining a decent age :

3. How it was characteristic, and unique in several respects, among its own kin or kind :

4. How it outlived nearly all its rivals, and that because of its own excellencies.

5. How it fulfilled an important mission, in (a) encouraging English Literature of the lighter kind, and the more wholesome species of the lighter kind; (b) encouraging the fine arts of painting and engraving; and (c) encouraging the industrial arts, particularly those of ornamental binding and embossing, and of high class printing.

The aforesaid encouragement to literature is shown by two facts: (1) that so many popular (and deservedly popular) poems first saw the light in its columns; and (2) that several eminent writers, both of prose and poetry, courted and were encouraged to continue to court, public approval, through its hospitable pages. While stating all this it may be frankly admitted that these pages were *too* "hospitable"; that the bulk of its letterpress is "sorry stuff," worthy of decent burial, and cheerful oblivion. Though nothing vicious or harmful, was ever found between its covers, yet there was plenty that was unprofitable, in our good friend the "Forget-Me-Not." With regard to both literature and Art, it is worthy of reminder that it was from a volume of the "Forget-Me-Not" that John Ruskin first became inspired with a love of art, and, indirectly, to a love of literature.

First then—

I.—THE "FORGET-ME-NOT" AS A SUCCESSOR AND IMITATOR.

In the first volume, issued in 1823, the editor, Mr. Frederic Shoberl, who, the *Publisher's Circular* for 10th July, 1891, says, was also a co-proprietor, states in his prospectus that "In submitting to the public the plan of the work here announced, the projector candidly acknowledges that he is influenced by the honest ambition of rivalling at least, if not surpassing, the many elegant and tasteful productions of the Continent." In pursuance of this scheme, the first volume is "embellished" (says the *Publisher's Cir-*

cular) with a frontispiece, "The Virgin with the Infant Saviour," engraved in stipple by Agar, after a painting by Vincenzo da San Gemignano, one of Raphael's pupils; and twelve vignettes of "The Months," by Edward Burney, one of which that journal reproduces. In further resemblance to the contents of the German and French Annuals, or pocket books the letterpress was made to consist of (a) poetry, viz. : verses by William Combe (Dr. Syntax), accompanying "The Months"; (b) a few tales translated from the German; (c) genealogies of the reigning sovereigns, from its prototype the "Almanach de Gotha"; (d) Tables of the population returns in Great Britain; and (e) an historical chronicle of the events of the preceding year. Like its prototype, it was bound in an ornamental paper cover, and was protected by a cardboard case. From a jocosely written article, entitled "Pocket-books and Keepsakes," in the first issue (in 1828) of the "Keep-sake," one of the "Forget-Me-Not" progeny, we learn that

The history of Pocket-Books and their forerunners, Almanacks, Calendars, Ephemerides, etc., is ancient beyond all precedent, even the Welshman's genealogy, the middle of which contained the creation of the world, is nothing to it. The hydraulic calendars of the Egyptians are things of yesterday; the wooden ones of our Saxon ancestors were to-morrow, compared with it. We shall, therefore, decline tracing it from all Eternity.

Furthermore the article tells us that it

Struck somebody, who was acquainted with the Literary Annuals of Germany, and who reflected upon this winter flower-bed of the booksellers—these pocket-books, souvenirs and Christmas presents, all in the lump—that he would combine the spirit of all of them, as far as labour, season, and sizeability went; and, omitting the barren or blank part, and being entirely original, produce such a pocket-book as had not been yet seen. The Magician in Boccaccio could not have done better. Hence arose the "Forget-Me-Not," the "Literary Souvenirs," the "Amulets," and the "Keepsakes," which combine the original contribution of the German Annual with the

F

splendid binding of the Christmas English present. "Far," says the writer, "are those, for whom this article is written, from undervaluing the works of their predecessors, or the contest with their rivals. It is a contest of sunbeams which shall produce the finest gems; whose tree, or whose parterre, shall burst out into a flush of more splendid blossoms."

In the "Literary Souvenir," the 4th of the *Annuaux*, and one of the most successful, which commenced in 1825, Mr. Alaric A. Watts, another minor poet, the founder of that publication, says in the preface to his first issue:—

Upwards of five years ago it was suggested to me by a literary friend, that a volume of annual recurrence, composed for the most part of light and popular literature, and embellished with engravings of a higher order than are usually to be met with in periodical works, would be likely to prove extremely acceptable to the public. I was so well pleased with the idea that, having decided upon my plan, I even went so far as to solicit the aid of several distinguished writers. Some circumstances, however, occurred which prevented me from carrying my views into effect; and it was not until after the appearance of a publication—The "Forget-Me-Not"—in direct and acknowledged imitation of the German Literary Almanacks, in this country, that I determined to persevere in my original intention. On consulting with my booksellers, I found that they had an annual volume, entitled "The Graces," at that time in progress; and it was only a few months ago that they intimated their desire that I should co-operate with them in the present undertaking. These details are of no great importance to the reader, as the mere merit of having suggested the publication of works of this description belongs exclusively to our continental neighbours; and they borrow so many useful hints from English literature that we have an undoubted right to make reprisals, whenever we meet with any suggestions of theirs at all worthy of our adoption.

In his fourth volume (for 1828) of the "Literary Souvenir" Mr. Watts says:—

If to Mr. Ackermann be due (as undoubtedly it is) the praise of having introduced books of this class into this country, I may fairly lay claim to the secondary merit, of having contributed to render them what they now are.

With regard to the German Annuals, I may mention one, the "Minerva," for 1831; that being the 22nd vol. of the series: the first being issued as far back as in 1809. It was published by Ernst Fleischer, at Leipsig. A contemporary review says, in reference to this book, and to the contemporary issue of the "Musenalmanach."

The German Annuals are certainly not so expensively, or, if the expression is more agreeable, so elegantly, got up as the English. To make amends, however, they are always neat, though of less costly materials; their literary contents are, at the least, equal in merit to ours and their cheapness is such, that even the poorest of the educated classes can afford to put them to their best use—make gifts of them at the household festival of Christmas.

"The 'Almanack of Muses' is then," this reviewer continues, "the youngest of a tribe, in which Goethe, Schiller, and the greatest of their contemporaries, have not disdained to exercise their talents. It is a mirror of the poets of the day, such as our friend Hogg once contemplated."

The name of "Forget-Me-Not" was probably copied from that of the older annual, the "Vergissmeinnicht," published also at Leipsig.

In the advertisement (or preface) to the second year's issue (1824) of the "Forget-Me-Not," the editor refers to "the very extensive demand for the first volume of this Miscellany," and the stimulus such demand gave him for making further progress, and, in the preface to the volume for 1825 he writes :

"Well aware that success naturally begets imitation, we fully anticipated, when commencing this work, as an annual token of friendship and affection, the appearance of other literary productions of a similar kind. The event has proved the accuracy of our opinion; but, notwithstanding the competition, last year, of two rivals for public favour—[these were "Friendship's Offering" and "The Graces"—not the "Literary Souvenir," as suggested by the writer in the *Publisher's Circular*—so little did their claims affect the popularity acquired by the "Forget-Me-Not,"

that a very large impression was exhausted before the arrival of that season for which it is more particularly destined; and, for upwards of a week before Christmas, the publisher was unable to execute the orders which he was continually receiving."

This reference to "Rivals" brings us to our second division.

II.—THE "FORGET-ME-NOT" AS A FOUNDER AND A MODEL.

The "Forget-Me-Not" founded a family—yea, a race—of beautifully illustrated drawing-room books, which were first issued in small size 12 mo, then, going through the stage of 8 vo., reached the full quarto. The model was closely followed, especially in the matter of the inscription plates and the "embellishments," by all the members of the series. In connection with the latter feature, enormous sums were paid to provide the lovely engravings which have become famous throughout the world, and which were characteristic of the English Annuals from 1825 to 1845, and gave them a high popularity, and a great value, in the British Isles and also on the Continent and in America. The competition for public favour, when the taste for these fine works was created, ruined many a publishing concern. Artists prospered from the "craze" (it was nothing else but a craze); but publishers and literary men did not reap half so much from the golden harvest. With regard to the illustrative engravings, the editor of the "Forget-Me-Not," in the preface to his volume for 1832, says:—

Plates, for which, a few years since, first rate artists were content to receive thirty or forty guineas, cannot now be obtained under one hundred, or one hundred and twenty; and it has been publicly asserted that even one hundred and eighty guineas have been paid for a single plate for one of the Annuals. . . . It cannot be denied that to the excellence of their embellishments, the Annuals owe the greatest portion of their popularity; sets of the engravings are sold at a higher rate than the entire volume, from which they have been

separated; and it is well known that single proof impressions of particular plates have obtained a price superior to that of the complete work.

In the second volume (1833) of Heath's magnificent "Picturesque Annual," the editor tells us, in the preface, that the public contributed from 10,000 to 12,000 guineas towards the cost of the preceding volume.

To quote again from "The Keepsake" of 1828, written before the splendid volumes of the "Picturesque Annual," containing beautiful engravings after drawings by Clarkson Stanfield and the equally lovely "Continental Annual" for 1832, in which the engravings are all from the paintings of Samuel Prout, were issued:—

If publications of this nature proceed as they have begun, we shall soon arrive at the millenium of souvenirs. Instead of engravings, we shall have paintings by the first masters; our paper must be vellum; our bindings in opal and amethyst; and nobody must read us except in a room full of luxury, or a bower of roses. As to the proprietor of the work, he will not condescend to be wholesale. He will take up the trade of "Keepsakes" exclusively; and Pitt diamonds are not to be sold by the lump. The purchaser will bring a casket for his duodecimo, and deposit a gem.

If that was the fact in 1828, what must have been the inference in 1830 and 1831 and 1832, when the number of annuals was multiplied several times over!

Of the number, and particulars, of the children and grandchildren of the "Forget-Me-Not," I need now only give the following summary and data.

I.—Out of a total of, say, 200 English annuals—which I can name—we may take it that, on an average, each Annual had at least two volumes; and the average issue of each volume was at least 2,000. (We know of some that had an issue of over 10,000, first edition, with an issue a few weeks afterwards of several thousands, on a second edition, and several issues of over 7,000). This estimate would

make the progeny of the little volume to consist of at least 800,000, or nearly one million volumes!

2. The last of the family died in the later fifties of the 19th century ;

3. The characteristic features of the series were—

- (a) The Inscription Plate — engraved or embossed —on the second fly leaf ;
- (b) The fine engravings, numbering on an average, between 12 and 20 in each volume ;
- (c) The letterpress, generally miscellaneous, but occasionally as in the "Travel" Annuals, consisting of prose by one descriptive writer ;
- (d) The connection between the engraving and a particular article or chapter on the same subject : sometimes the article prompting the illustration : sometimes the illustration prompting the article :
- (e) Eccentric, generally beautiful, binding.

The first, and longest lived, just 20 years, of the large sized Annual was "Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book" edited by L.E.L.

It was a curious circumstance in the publication of these Annuals, that often the same publishers issued rival and strongly competitive productions ; also a curious incident that many of the contributors to some annuals were themselves editors of others—e.g., Thomas Hood, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, T. Roscoe, T. Cunningham, T. Pringle, and A. A. Watts. The rivalry was apparently very friendly, a combined effort being made to beat the rest of the world. It was in some of these volumes that many of our leading poets first saw their productions in print. Besides, they were patronised and contributed to by nearly all the contemporary writers, including Coleridge, Southey, Tennyson, Praed, James Montgomery, Ruskin, Mrs. Hemans, Miss Mitford, Barry Cornwall, Macaulay, Mrs. Norton,

Tom Hood, Bowles, Campbell, Moore, Hogg, Cunningham, Charles Lamb, Sir Walter Scott, the Shelleys, Captain Marryat, R. Brinsley Sheridan, Bulwer Lytton, Dickens and Thackeray.

The chief charms in the volumes consist, however, of the "embellishments"; for, though it is seldom that any poet or great prose-writer gave the best of his work to the letter-press yet the artists, painters, and engravers alike vie with one another to produce the very highest specimens of pictorial art. With regard to the illustrations, they are all in line engraving, except a few in stipple; a few later ones in lithograph or woodcut; one in mezzotint, and one whole set in aquatint; and many of these line engravings are masterpieces of art. It would be tedious to give a list of those most interesting artists—the great line engravers—who contributed to the beauty of the embellishments; for only enthusiastic collectors of line engravings are interested in engraver's names. On the other hand many of the painters whose works have been thus rendered in black and white—works either lent to the publishers for the purpose, as were many samples of the classical masters, or specially produced for the occasion—are men whose names are household words in all ranks of taste, and almost all circles of society.

III.—THE "FORGET-ME-NOT," THE SURVIVOR OF ITS OFFSPRING.

During its life, from 1823 to 1848, the "Forget-Me-Not" was accompanied by a "cloud" of nearly 200 *Annuals*: the years 1830, 1831, and 1832 being the most prolific, producing between them no less than 65 new *Annuals*—of which 49 were issued in the former year. Of the 200 known English *Annuals*, the "Forget-Me-Not" survived 180; a few, six in number, contemporaries outlived it; the remainder started after its death. It survived six superiors—The

"Anniversary" (born and died in 1829), the "Gem" (4 vols.), the "Amulet" (10 vols.) the "Literary Souvenir" (11 vols.), Heath's "Picturesque Annual" (9 vols.), and Prout's "Continental Annual" (one volume only, issued in 1832); and its one equal, the "Friendship's Offering." The "Keepsake" alone outlived it; unless we include in this class of superiors those pretentious volumes, Heath's "Book of Beauty" and Fisher's "Drawing Room Scrap-Book." The "Keepsake," the Queen of the Annuals, survived her worthy ancestress just nine years.

In the seventh (1830) volume of the "Friendship's Offering," is a prologue in verse, the book itself being the imaginary speaker, from which it will be interesting to quote the following:—

Nay more: my kind admirers hint
 (Though I dare say there's nothing in't)
 That even the brilliant "Souvenir"
 Will be eclipsed when I appear;
 That the meek, prudish "Amulet"
 With bitter jealousy will fret;
 That "Keepsake," "Gem," "Forget-Me-Not,"
 And some whose names I have forgot,
 Who dress themselves in silk attire,
 For very envy will expire.

The preface to the issue of 1842 strikes a mournful note and seems to prophesy the early death of the "Forget-Me-Not."

Change is the lot of man; and it were folly to repine at that which is one of the conditions on which he holds existence. From the operation of this universal law of Nature, his works are not exempt, any more than himself. I am naturally led to this reflection at the present moment, when I have to perform the duty of introducing to the public the twentieth volume of this Miscellany. During the twenty years of its career, this work has partaken of that character of change which attaches to all human things

It were in vain to deny that in another respect a change has taken place, by which this publication, like all the rest of its class, has

been deeply affected. Whether through fashion, caprice, or the positive demerits of some of those new competitors which started each succeeding year in the race of imitation, and mostly broke down in their first course, certain it is that the *Annuals*, from especial favourites of the public, have come to be regarded almost with indifference.

The cause of decline, decay, and death of the "Forget-Me-Not," in particular, I have considered under my next heading; but the reason for the same fate befalling the other *Annuals* may be gathered from the following extract from the Preface of a contemporary *Annual* in 1832:—

In catering for the public taste, the editor of "*The Cabinet of Literary Gems*" had endeavoured to make such a selection of articles of permanent interest and value, as to avoid, as far as possible, causing the usual complaint to be made, against this production, which has fallen to the lot of most of the other *Annuals*—that of their being books of the moment, instead of becoming standard library volumes. It has also been said, that the *Annuals* are all alike; that in looking into them we find the same eternal names, the same eternal poetry, the same eternal prose; that that which is told one way in one, is reiterated, after a different fashion, in another; but, without arrogating to ourselves anything like flattery, we can safely and honestly affirm, that the "*Cabinet*" is, as a whole, free from that light, uninteresting matter, of which this class of literature has hitherto been composed.

Another agent in the killing of the *Annual Craze* was satire, in the form particularly of humorous caricatures or parodies. One of these was the "*Comic Offering*." Its binding was like that of the *Sacred Annuals*, afterwards imitated by Bible and Hymn Book publishers; it had the title page—the vignette title page, a most ingenious "take off"—the frontispiece—the Preface—the list of contents—and even a "list of embellishments"—all in caricature of the more serious members of the family.

With regard to the general contents of the "Forget-Me-Not," these share the common estimate, formed and expressed in contemporary times; and this estimate is

not a flattering one. The *Annuals* created a craze, the craze denoted some insanity in the public mind of the period; and much of this insanity is apparent within the curious circle of prolific writers, from which the general contributions were obtained. Let me give a sample—I could quote many a similar one—of contemporary criticism. This will be more eloquent than any words of mine, of the feeling, in literary and journalistic quarters at the time, with regard to this curious craze, and its curious "coddlers." The matter is interesting to us, as students of cycles of taste: it is almost a chapter out of the history of English psychological, or physiological, or intellectual phenomena. Referring to the "*Forget-Me-Not*" for 1831, the reviewer says:

As to the literary contents, or what it is now fashionable to call the letterpress, there is great inequality of merit. . . . The poetry, on the whole, is particularly indifferent, and has, indeed, been contributed for the most part by persons whose names we have a sort of dim recollection of having seen in *Annuals* before, but certainly nowhere else under the sun. We have a host of such amiable writers as Mrs. Perring, Charles Bickmore, Esq., the Rev. Richard Polwhele (evidently a great creature), H. F. Chorley, Esq., Miss S. E. Hatfield (quite a gem), Captain Longmore, Miss Susanna Strickland (a very great creature, who writes, we observe, in all the *Annuals*), Nicholas Michell, Esq., George Downes, A.M., Mrs. Abdy (another gem), Henry Brandreth, junr., Esq., Miss Mary Anne Cursham (a striking poetess), Mrs. Eliza Walker (a sweet composer), and, though last not least, J. F. Hollings, Esq. (Heaven bless him!)

"O fond attempt to give a deathless lot

To names ignoble, born to be forgot!"

Yet all these ladies and gentlemen no doubt consider themselves splendid individuals, and distribute on an average, eight copies each of the "*Forget-Me-Not*" among their friends and admirers. Loath should we be to break into their dream of bliss, were it not that we hold Mr. Frederick Shoberl responsible for their somniferousness, and are afraid that the magnetic sleep into which he lulls them may be attended with dangerous consequences. We fear that they may get possessed with visions of glory, and that Miss S. E. Hatfield or the Reverend Richard Polwhele may die in

the erroneous belief that their names will descend to all posterity, although the unquestionable fact is, that they will not live one hour longer than those of Captain Longmore or Mrs. Eliza Walker. If J. F. Hollings, Esq., has a moment's better chance than Charles Bickmore, Esq., it can only be because Hollings has committed just one contribution; whereas the unfortunate Charles Bickmore has been tempted to do two. And as for thee, Miss Mary Anne Cursham, much do we wish that thou wert married either to H. F. Chorley or Nicholas Michell. Has not the celebrated Mrs. Bowditch become the no less celebrated Mrs. Lee? And why may not the effulgence of a Cursham be absorbed into that of a Chorley or a Nicholas? Why not follow the example of Mrs. Abdy? She is already a wife, and her maiden name is forgotten for ever."

IV.—THE "FORGET-ME-NOT" AS SPECIALIST, AND AS AN ORIGINATOR.

Under this heading I will briefly say that we owe the following specialities to our "proto-Annual" of England:—

1. The embossed inscription plate. This first occurs in the 1826 vol.
2. The case enclosing the bound volume.
3. The beautifully-engraved paper wrappers. The designs are different—no two being quite alike—of these dainty "greenbacks." The "Literary Souvenir" imitated this style, but did not reach the grace of the "Forget-Me-Not" designs. The "Winter's Wreath," in special large paper edition, made a not ungraceful, but artistic imitation.
4. The founding of a family of Juvenile Annuals, one of the best being Ackermann's Juvenile "Forget-Me-Not."
5. The naming of a series of Annuals after flowers and plants; and after sentiments similar to that adopted in its own title, e.g., "Remembrance"; "Souvenir"; "Remember Me"; "Amaranth"; "Laurel"; "Evergreen," etc., just as the "Keepsake" started the "Talismans," the various "Pledges," the "Amulets," the "Bijous," the "Cameos," the "Gems," etc.

6. The creation of a tribe—a "flower-garden" rather—of tributes to the "Forget-Me-Not" flower, which, previously had been neglected, if not almost forgotten, in light literature. Of these there is a large contribution in the pages of the "Forget-Me-Not" itself; but every Annual took up the cry of "Forget-Me-Not," "Forget-Me-Not," until the name must have been wearisome to most sane people of the period.

The following specimen of this fancy is from the "Forget-Me-Not" of 1824:—

The sculptor, painter, while they trace
On canvas or in stone,
Another's figure, form, or face,
Our motto's spirit own;
Each thus would like to leave behind
His semblance—and for what?
But that the thought that fills his mind
Is this—"Forget-Me-Not!"

The Poet, too, who, borne along
In thought to distant time,
Pours forth his inmost soul in song,
Holds fast this hope sublime!
He would a glorious name bequeath,
Oblivion shall not blot,
And round that name his thoughts enwreath
The words—"Forget-Me-Not!"

7. The collection of a long series of short tales in our own language, and by English authors, illustrated by British artists, a link in this respect between the items in the old English Monthly Illustrated Magazines of Fiction, fellow creations with *Chambers' Journal*, and the present Magazines, and the Illustrated Monthlies of the seventies and eighties.

The more or less distinctive features of the "get up" of our Annual, in other words, her dress, or costume can be quickly described. From 1823 to 1831 the "Forget-Me-

"Not" was bound in boards 18mo.; and issued in a card-board case. From 1827 to 1831 the binding was in specially designed green covers; the case being decorated with a duplicate of the special green paper designs. The price was 12s. per volume. From 1832 to the early forties, the volumes appeared every year both in plain dark green cloth, and in brown morocco gilt, with an occasional binding (e.g. in 1833) in red silk, like the "Keepsake." Early in the forties the size was slightly increased, and the green cloth binding was lighter in shade, gilt and decorated, until it resembled some popular child's book, and the inscription plate became a work of poor lithography. This was the chief cause of its death in 1848. It lost its identity and distinctiveness, and became simply one fairly good book with pretty pictures amid a hundred equally good books with equally pretty pictures. In three of the copies in the later thirties, we find a lithographed inscription plate, or rather ornamental second or vignette title page, which is utterly commonplace—quite enough, in the judgment of any person of taste, to take the book out of the category of fine art volumes. For several years, and up to the end, the printer of the volumes was F. Shoberl, junr., of the Haymarket.

V.—THE "FORGET-ME-NOT," AS BENEFACTOR, VIZ., AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO, AND ENCOURAGER OF, LITERATURE AND ART.

Under this heading I will record most of this Annual's contribution to—1. Standard English Literature. 2. The Fine Arts. (a) of painting. (b) of engraving. 3. The industrial arts of (a) bookbinding, (b) embossing, (c) fine printing.

And first with regard to Literature. The "Forget-Me-Not" cannot show so good a list of eminent names, in connection with its literary contents, as can the

"Keepsake," or the "Friendship's Offering," or even some of the minor members of the Annual family. We miss the Coleridges, and Scott, and Ruskin. The following undoubted literary men were, however, among the long list of contributors, and these all appeared in the earlier volumes, the later contributors being all mediocre people—Thomas Campbell, Thomas Hood, Thomas Moore, James Montgomery, James Hogg (the "Ettrick Shepherd"), Mrs. Hemans, Miss Mitford, Barry Cornwall, Francis Jeffery, Charles Swain, Mr. and Mrs. Howitt, W. L. Bowles, Douglas Jerrold, Laman Blanchard, L.E.L., Rev. Geo. Croly, T. Haynes Bayley (the song writer), Professor Aytoun, Allan Cunningham, G. P. R. James, Harrison Ainsworth, H. D. Inglis, Miss Jewsbury, Eliza Cook, the Hon. Mrs. Norton, and Miss Strickland.

Just a few notes on some contributions of these writers, and a short reference to Shoberl, the editor, himself.

First, we have, in this annual, the first print or publication of, among others, the following deservedly popular poems:—Thos. Hood's beautiful "Ruth" ("She stood breast high amidst the corn.") Hood, like Mrs. Hemans, first contributed in 1826. Mrs. Hemans' "Cliffs of Dover" (1827); "Night-blowing flowers" (1827); "Evening Song of the Tyrolese Peasants" (1828); "Come to the Sunset Tree." James Montgomery's "Night" (1824, the first literary vol.). The same poet's "Wild Puck of Malmesbury Abbey" (1840). Montgomery was a school-fellow of the editor at Fulneck School, Yorks. L.E.L.'s "Isabel, or the Ruined Cottage" (1825); "Choice" (rubies or flowers), (1826). Miss Mitford first contributed to the Annual in 1826; she then giving a short dramatic sketch. We have the first publication of Byron's earliest verses, dedicated to his young love, and some unpublished lines by James Thomson.

With regard to the editor, we glean the following particulars from the "Dictionary of National Biography":—He was born in London, in 1775, and educated at the Moravian School, at Fulneck, near Leeds. Having settled in London, he became, with Henry Colburn, the originator and co-proprietor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, which began on 1st February, 1814. For some time he acted as editor, and contributed original articles and reviews. He was long associated with Rudolph Ackermann, whose *Repository of Arts* he edited from the third to the seventy-second number (March, 1809, to December, 1828). He conducted Ackermann's English Annual, the "Forget-Me-Not." He also edited Ackermann's "Juvenile Forget-Me-Not" from 1828 to 1832 (five volumes). He died at Thistle Grove, Brompton, London, on 5th March, 1853, and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, on 12th March.

Next with regard to the Fine Arts.

The engagement or commissioning of nearly every eminent engraver and of most leading contemporary painters, gave a great impetus to English Art.

On the third division — the Industrial Arts — I will make only a very few observations. The Annuals encouraged good ornamental work of every kind; each publication vieing with its competitors to produce something new and something good. The bookbindings were so beautiful that the subsequent sixty years have not taught us to improve on them. The velvets, the moroccos of all tints, the watered silks, the embossed papers, cardboards and other materials, the engraved coloured papers, the gilded cloths, the gilt edging, the toolings, the designs, tell their own tale of a desire to please and elevate taste. Many of the coverings were embossed. This industrial art was borrowed, I believe, from the continent—being like the Annual species itself—"Made

in Germany"; but it soon found a congenial home, "atelier," and market, in our country. Some of the best embossing work I have seen is British. The "Forget-Me-Not" set the fashion for this beautiful form of art; and we owe to it some of the prettiest specimens in existence. As regards fine printing, the "Literary Souvenir" and the "Winter's Wreath" have some most beautiful founts which are well worthy of study and copying by our art printers of to-day.

VI.—THE "FORGET-ME-NOT" AS A HUMOURIST.

The reader will be startled, perhaps shocked, to learn that there is some humour in these volumes. With the exception of Thomas Hood's pieces, which have a character all their own, the laughter-producing articles are, however, not those which are ostensibly jocose, but the serious ones! The humour of the "Forget-Me-Not" is nearly always unconscious. Here are some of the titles or articles appearing in this Annual.

Vol. for 1840.—"To the bust of my son, Charles."

Vol. for 1845.—"The Deserted Cemetery."

„ —"To a young friend with a copy of Ackermann's
'Forget-Me-Not.'"

„ —"Remember Me Not."

Vol. for 1825.—"Verses to a lady who presented the author with
the flower of a field plant, which is said to cause
the gifted person to dream of the giver."

„ —"Lines to a lady who had refused three separate
proposals, with a cameo figure of Sappho."

„ —"The Rational Lunatic."

„ —"To a lady with a leaf gathered from the Mulberry
Tree planted by Milton, in the gardens of Christ
College, Cambridge."

Vol. for 1827.—"Excuse for writing out my own praise."

„ —"To an infant sleeping on its mother's breast dur-
a storm."

„ —"Impromptu on being desired by a young lady to
write some lines in her album."

„ —"The red-nosed Lieutenant."

- Vol. for 1827.—"Lines on a lady's speaking in rapture of the life of a Cottager."
- "—"Impromptu on seeing a sable vest thrown casually over a lady's harp, which had for some time been mute and untouched, owing to her indisposition."
- "—"To a lady on her saying she did not believe me."
- "—"To an Itinerant Musician."
- Vol. for 1828.—"Mary's Smile."
- "—"Time employed. Time enjoyed. Addressed to a young lady from whom the author had received an elegantly wrought watch pocket."
- Vol. for 1829.—"Epitaph on a gnat found crushed on the leaf of a lady's album."
- Vol. for 1830.—"Lines, written on placing a lily of the valley in the dead hand of a child."
- Vol. for 1821.—"To a friend returning overland from India."
- "—"To the Moon."
- Vol. for 1833.—"The Moonlight of the Heart."
- "—"The Murdered Tinman."
- "—"The Skylark: addressed to a lady; on hearing that bird's song early in the morning of February 27, 1832, when the ground was covered with hoar frost, and the small pools were plated [!] with ice."
- Vol. for 1846.—"The unconscious slave."
- Vol. for 1837.—"Puss and the Poetess; a tale of sense and sentiment."
- Vol. for 1836.—"Reflections on the marriage-day of a young lady, whose mother died during her childhood."
- Vol. for 1826.—"The Regretted Ghost."

This Annual was ephemeral, not because it was effeminate; but because it was unequal, with a bias towards the trivial. It was one of the "cakes" of literature, not the bread. And even cakes become distasteful, when they provide only two or three currants each, notwithstanding that the surface is liberally endowed with sugar. England began to see that the larger these "expensive currants" became, the poorer became the crumb. In other words that to pay the exorbitant fees of the few literary stars (serving as passports) and to provide high class embellishments, the

general letterpress had to be let to volunteer, amateur, gratuitous and mediocre writers : that, in fact, the book became no longer " literature " proper.

Literature to be lasting—and "permanence" is the natural result and the test of true literature--must be not only correct, but convincing ; not only pure but powerful ; not only sweet but senseful : it must have not only grace but grit ; and, when it teaches, it should teach in diction, not demure, but drastic, sound and strong, with nerve and sympathy. Our " Forget-Me-Not " showed but few of these features ; and, as a miscellany, must be placed upon those more inaccessible shelves of ours, devoted to the fine arts of book illustration. In placing them there, however, we by no means say that they are not worthy of reference or of systematic classification. They do not constitute a " Casket of Jewels " ; but they form an " alluvial bed of encrusted soil," where interesting fossils abound, and also, amid the fossils, many a brilliant chrystal of homely spar, which—though not a diamond—is well worth the trouble of searching for.



